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Aliens vs. Predator

The bitch is back!

Unreal Tournament
Better than QUAKE III: ARENA?

THE PCXL AWARDS

- **101 GAMES RATED**
- **GAME OF THE YEAR**
- **BABE OF THE YEAR**

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HONEST, UNBIASED REVIEWS
Tribes, Myth II
Rogue Squadron
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brought Garret out
of the shadows...
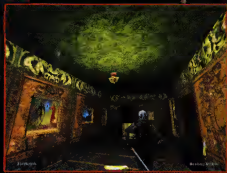
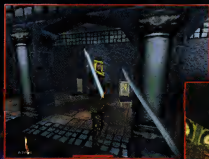# THIEF
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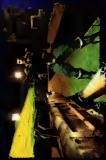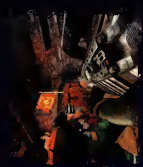
❖ All-new and enhanced big-bodycount weaponry – the Redeemer, the IMPACT Hammer and more.

The Kingdoms

THE ONCE MAGNIFICENT land of Darien has been brutally divided among four warring sibling monarchs. Now it is time for you to embark upon a massive crusade to rule the Kingdom of Darien.

Choose your side, plot your strategy and prepare for the fight of your life: the epic battle to conquer the land of Darien.

Attack on flat 3D train field with jungle, castles and more.

Features

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- Use weapons forged from steel and stone. Attack on foot with swords or at a distance with cannons and catapults.
- Traverse 3D environments filled with forests, marshes, rolling hills and mystical keeps.
- A streamlined and intuitive interface lets you concentrate on the combat.
- Challenge friends over LAN, modem and on Cavedog Entertainment's own **Boneyards™**
- Features hardware support for stunning graphics and special effects.

Charge with hand-to-hand mêlée units, including knights, siege works, catapults and skeleton archers.

"TA: Kingdoms is a fantasy tag-team match on a global scale. It's melodrama, it's excitement, it works."
–Computer Gaming World: Cover story

"...the...look of Kingdoms is completely unbelievable."
–Imagine Gaming Network

"...some of the most amazing character design we have ever seen..."
—GameFan

are in chaos...

Attack the skilled ships of Taros with mighty naval vessels.

Powerful dragons bring death from above.

the epic battle to conquer Darien begins this month.

TOTAL ANNIHILATION

KINGDOMS™

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ON THE COVER

The Alien and Predator part was easy. The color was a different story. We had the cover laid out in every color in the rainbow before finally deciding on the one you are looking at (maybe). Isn't it pretty. Hopefully it was this image, color, and text which made you pick up this fine magazine, if so let us know at coversoldme@pcxl.com

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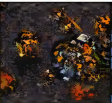
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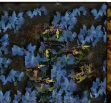
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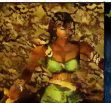
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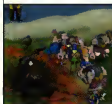
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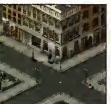
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We are doing our part to help *Daikatana* set the world record for long winded rants written about a piece of vapor, and Rob is high on crack

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An unheard of amount of demos on our two discs. And a special appearance by Irish rockers U2 — don't miss it

YA SEE, WE DO HAVE "FRIENDS"

CELEBRITY APPEARANCES

Bill Clinton (again), The Wonder Twins (the better half, you know the bucket), Charles Bronson, Denise Richards (as always), Sarah Michelle Gellar, Robin Williams (he just appeared so we could frag him), Elizabeth Hurley, Salma Hayek, Matt Dillon, Susan Lucci (no she doesn't win anything), Jeri Ryan, Natasha Henstridge, Bjork, Milla Jovovich, Blossom, Meg Ryan, Hitler, Norman Schwarzkoff, the General Lee, Hannibal Smith, Mr. T, U2, OJ Simpson, Dr. Laura (no she's not naked that's gross), and many more we can't remember right now
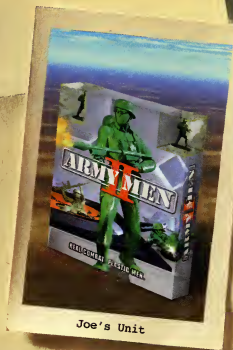
The Kitchen Campaigns

Intuitive Interface

New point-and-click mouse interface is easy for beginners and familiar to gamers.

Toy soldier warfare moves to the kitchen, bedroom, front yard, and garage.

Crazy New Weapons

Free* Multi-player Competition

New worlds, weapons, and interface make this Top 10 multiplayer game even better.

Magnifying glasses and spray cans complement your traditional arsenal.

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HERE COMES THE CAVALRY

For the past year **PCXL** staffers have spent more time in the office than O.J. spends on the golf course (looking for Nicole's killer, no doubt). Days, nights, weekends, and even holidays we were here. Why? Because we want to create the best damn magazine in the world (and we have no lives). Just as we were beginning to lose what was left of our minds, we found help. Please join me in welcoming Chuck Osborn, Philip Mayard, and Gia DeCarlo to our highly dysfunctional family. They will provide the magazine with insight, wisdom, humor, and new ideas which will make PCXL that much better. They will also get coffee, clean our desks, and generally be slaves.

As we continue to expand, I want to thank our growing readership for recognizing and appreciating our hard work. There is nothing more satisfying than hearing praises from readers, it makes what we do worthwhile. So feel free to send praise to wereasskissers@pcxl.com, or if you have complaints send them to usuckthebigone@pcxl.com.

We've created something different and will continue to innovate, educate, and entertain you as long as you'll have us, or until we become incredibly bored – whichever comes first.

[signature]

MIKE SALMON, *Editor in Chief*

THE TEAM

CONTACTS

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Hector Salazar, PCXL scarecrow, recently announced that he is 99.9% certain he will retire

TWO DISCS SPIN AS ONE

Under a Blood Red Disc, The Joshua Disc, Rattle and Disc

This month mega rockers U2 are our guest artists ...

Where the Discs have no nome / Where the Discs have no nome / I'm still building them burning down Discs / Burrrrrning down Discs ...

Early morning, April 4 / Shot rings out in the Memphis sky / Free at last, they took your life / But they could not take your Disc / in the noooome of Disc / One more in the nome of Disc ...

I have installed highest demo / I have spun through the maps / Only to be with Disc / Only to be with Disc / But I stilllllll haven't found Disc I'm looking for ...

And you give your Disc away / And you give your Disc away / And you give / And you give / And you give your Disc away / With or without Disc / With or without Disc, oh hoh / I can livvvvveee / With or without Disc ...

DEMO	PATCHES	TOOLS	MAPS	A/V	DISC 1 OR 2	RATING	
	◇	▧			◎		**3D CARD DRIVERS** Reference and card-specific updates
	◇				◎		**3D GAME LAUNCHERS** The latest versions of GameSpy and PingTool
D	D				◎		**ALIENS VS. PREDATOR (2 VERSIONS)** Try both the Marine and Predator
D	D				◎		**ALPHA CENTAURI** Sid Meier's turn-based space-based Civilization. Oh yes!
D	D				◎	7	**CARMAGEDDON 2** A playable demo plus the latest patch
D	D				◎		**CHAOS GATE** Warhammer strategy for those who just can't get enough
D	D				◎	6	**DARK VENGEANCE** Read the review, then find out all about that ass!
D	D				◎		**DAWN OF ACES** Flight sims becoming a regular feature in PCXL? Surely not
	◇				◎		**DEAD RECKONING** Bump into and then shoot things
D					◎	6	**DUNE 2000** An oldie and still an oldie
D	D				◎	9	**FIFA '99** '98... '99... there are changes in there, somewhere
D	D				◎		**GANGSTERS** It's here to amuse you
D	D				◎	9	**GRIM FANDANGO** Demo and patch of the only adventure game PCXL will play
	D				◎	11	**HALF-LIFE** Latest patch for Valve's first-person shooter killer app
	◇				◎		**KILLER TANK** Tanks kill. Quit tanking before it's too late
D					◎	8	**KING'S QUEST: MOE** Another adventure, but no barkeep in sight — doh!
	D				◎	7	**MADDEN 99** It's getting there, slowly, but check it out for yourself
D					◎	6	**MOTORHEAD** It's a racing game. What do you expect?
D	D				◎		**MYTH II** More bloody mayhem with grumpy, Molotov-slinging dwarves
D	D				◎		**NASCAR RACING '99** Try it out for yourself and tell us we are wrong
D	D				◎	9	**NFS III** That's *Need For Speed III* for the acronym-impaired
D	D				◎	9	**NHL '99** Red Wings versus Capitals
	D				◎		**QUAKE II** The demo and the "final" patch. Ever, honest
D					◎	9	**RAINBOW SIX** The demo (which we stole the first time around — sorry PCG)
	D				◎		**REDLINE** The epic development cycle continues. Find out if it's worth the wait
D					◎	8	**RETURN FIRE 2** "The game most in need of an interface overhaul" award winner
D					◎		**SHOGO** Try out some mech-busting action
	D				◎	8	**SHOGO** A multiplayer demo and the latest patch
D					◎	7	**SIN** Try it out, but don't ask Activision how it's selling
			▧		◎		**SPEED BUSTERS** The new Mexico track
D					◎		**STARCRAFT** Once more, just for old time's sake
D	D				◎	9	**S.W.A.T. 2** We musta missed *S.W.A.T. 1*
D	◇	▧	◇◇		◎	9	**THIEF** Shoot arrows at stuff. Quietly
	◇	▧			◎		**UNREAL** A veritable cornucopia of maps, tools and more
D	D				◎		**WORLD LEAGUE SOCCER '99** Everyone plays the sport, but no one watches
D	D				◎		**X GAMES PRO BOARDER** R U X-treme? Me all!

→ Send your feedback, including suggestions for musical guests to disceditor@pcxl.com

THE DISC MINI-FAQ

Q: How can I suggest a musical artist for the "high on crack" disc editor?

A: At this point, our disc editor, Ed, is fully Windows 98 compatible. However, some backward-compatibility issues could remain with some of the wiring in his head. So blame those Microsoft basterds (or genetics), not us!

Q: How come *Sin* takes up 800 frickin' MB on my hard drove?

A: It's an old program Microsoft has been using for years called "code bloat," which artificially inflates file sizes so that basic programs like Word require a frickin' Pentium II to run. Can you say planned obsolescence and strategic partnering

Q: What the...?

BEST OF '98

MYTH II

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR

FIFA '99

"I Noticed Starsiege Running And Went In For A Closer Look. Oh My God... What I Saw Was Breathtaking."

– THE VOODOO REVIEW

"Clearly The Frontrunner In The Coming Industry-Wide Mech War..."

– OGR.COM

SMOKIN'

"The Game Is Fast And Fun With Dazzling 3D Landscapes."

– GAMEPOWER

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PLAY

We may be giving out awards but no one is getting our damn cup – got it?

1st Annual **PCXL AWARDS**

Best games of 1998

1998

Bigger than the Oscars, more important than the Nobel Prize, and more half-naked babes than the Golden Globes. We've finally had a chance to play every single game that was released in 1998: The good, the bad and the Linda Tripp, and therefore it's time to dish out the awards. Every magazine gives out awards, but at **PCXL** we aim to be different. Read on to find out what games, developers, and moments made 1998 such a great year in gaming.

Best use of man milk ⋯→ There's Something About Mary

RANDOM AWARDS

Not all awards fit neatly into a major category, so here's a list of other notable winners in 1998

MOST COMPLETE PACKAGE

UNREAL ⋯→ Great box, great game, and an easy-to-use level editor, all in one juicy package

BEST GAME BOX

DEER HUNTER ⋯→ The game sucked, but there's no arguing that the box was a marketing department's wet dream

BEST USE OF WRONG SOUND EFFECT

CARMAGEDDON 2 ⋯→ A vegetarian's nightmare. No matter what you run over, you hear the sound of a cow being struck by a car. It rocks!

THE CRACK-WHORE OF THE GAMES INDUSTRY

WIZARDWORKS ⋯→ The people who brought us *Deer Hunter* continue to pump out crap games that idiotic consumers buy. This is the same way Acclaim killed the console industry years ago. Stop already!

GAME OF THE YEAR

Only one game can reign supreme

With praise and thanks we award this, the pinnacle of all awards, to the one game that stood out as genre-breaking and industry-advancing. Likely not a big surprise to anyone, this game delivered a single-handed coup de grâce to the rest of the first-person genre.

The Top Dog
HALF-LIFE
Publisher: Sierra
Developer: Valve

WHY IT'S CLEARLY THE BEST ⋯→
The unanimous winner, *Half-Life*, really is all that. The complete package of graphics, sound, design, depth, and (gasp!) story, makes this hands-down best game of the year.
HOW IT CHANGED GAMING ⋯→
Half-Life proved that story and a first-person shooter could work together without boring us to tears. More importantly, it showed that the single-player game isn't dead, it's just getting started. If we're lucky there will be several *Half-Life* clones in 1999, though it's doubtful any of them will be this complete or this much fun.

StarCraft | Certainly not second place in our hearts.

IN 1999 IT WILL ⋯→ Stay on the hard drives of all hardcore gamers as they await the release of *Team Fortress 2*. Once that comes out, *Half-Life* will slowly overtake *Quake II* as the most played first-person shooter on the net.
BEST MOMENT ⋯→ Finding out the computer AI marines that you are fighting are intelligent enough to pass your college physics final exam, not to mention check your ticket to the afterlife.

The Bridesmaid
STARCRAFT
Publisher: Blizzard
Developer: Blizzard

WHY IT'S NEARLY THE BEST ⋯→
Games released in the early part of the year are often forgotten by the end of the year. That's not the case with *StarCraft*. With over one million copies sold, *StarCraft* is still going strong, and still played fanatically. This, the best realtime strategy game ever made, was worth

Half-life | The unanimous winner and easily the best game in years.

the wait, and then some. Quit whining *C&C* fans, even you recognize the brilliance in this game.

HOW IT CHANGED GAMING ···⇢ The introduction of three different, yet completely balanced races has changed the face of realtime strategy games and even inspired games in other genres to try the same thing. Until Blizzard reinvents the genre again with *WarCraft 3* or Westwood shakes things up with *Tiberian Sun*, *StarCraft* will stand as the measure by which all other realtime strategy games are judged

IN 1999 IT WILL···⇢ Continue to be played by masses of people and won't likely slow down until Westwood releases *C&C Tiberian Sun*.

BEST MOMENT···⇢ Forming secret alliances with every player in the game until you are powerful enough to take them out, one by one.

The Darkhorse
RAINBOW SIX
Developer: Red Storm
Publisher: Red Storm

WHY IT'S PRETTY DARN CLOSE TO BEING THE BEST···⇢ The surprise game of the year was almost a lock for game of the year — until *Half-Life* came along. The graphics and sound aren't anything special, but the gameplay is extraordinary.

HOW IT CHANGED GAMING ···⇢ The *Rainbow Six* clones are coming! This game turned macho *Quake* gunners into cowardly soldiers who spent more time hiding than shooting. The innovative gameplay introduced a real fear of death to deathmatch (not to mention the best TK possibilities in the business) and we loved it.

IN 1999 IT WILL···⇢ Continue to enjoy online success and a renewed interest after the release of the *Eagle Watch* add-on pack. It will also produce one of the most highly anticipated (and difficult to name – *Rainbow Seven?*) sequels of the year

BEST MOMENT···⇢ The pangs of guilt after accidentally gunning down half of your team [*Ed* — funny that Mike wrote this part!].

THE OTHER NOMINEES
Though not quite good enough to make it into the big three, these games still made their mark.

4. Thief: The Dark Project
Developer: Looking Glass
Publisher: Eidos

OUR TAKE···⇢ We never thought we'd like a game that rewarded cowardly sneaking around rather than blowing things up, but this game proved us wrong.

5. Tribes
Developer: Dynamix
Publisher: Dynamix

OUR TAKE···⇢ Mind blowing levels, blisteringly fast Internet code, and the rarity of all rarities – unique gameplay that makes you say "Wow!", forwards and backwards.

6. Unreal
Developer: Epic MegaGames
Publisher: GT Interactive

OUR TAKE···⇢ The best-looking game of the year had only one major flaw – buggy Internet code.

7. Need Far Speed III
Developer: Electronic Arts
Publisher: Electronic Arts

OUR TAKE···⇢ The best racing game on the PC has outstanding graphics and tight control. This puppy plays really well, even when you're completely trashed (see January '98 issue. We don't remember enough to write about it now).

8. Grim Fandango
Developer: LucasArts
Publisher: LucasArts

OUR TAKE···⇢ The best graphic adventure of the year used an amazing story, genuinely funny dialogue, cool art design and creative gameplay to earn the love of PCXL (and we don't usually bother with graphic adventure types).

9. Fallout 2
Developer: Black Isle Studios
Publisher: Interplay

10. NHL '99
Developer: EA Canada
Publisher: EA Sports

OUR TAKE···⇢ The best sports game anywhere, *NHL '99* actually improved on *NHL '98*. Something we didn't think was possible.

Need for Speed III | Real fast.

Tribes | Multiplayer king.

Unreal | Not good enough.

OUR TAKE···⇢ Last year's best RPG gets a sequel that doesn't disappoint. The depth and style prove that the latest in 3D accelerated graphics won't change great gameplay one bit.

Thief | Nearly stole a spot in the top three.

RANDOM **AWARDS**

BEST GAME AD
GLOBAL DOMINATION···⇢ Funny, plus it had a real nice cleavage shot

BEST USE OF WOMAN PARTS ON GAME BOX
FORSAKEN···⇢ The naked woman on the cover had nothing to do with the game, but she sure made the box purty.

THE "PLEASE STOP MAKING" AWARD
TOMB RAIDER III···⇢ The game engine is four years old. We still love Lara (what's not to love, eh?) but she desperately needs a new engine for *TR IV*, pretty please!

LISTEN

It's a dark cave. Inside your head, you hear your heart pounding.
Damp **echoes** resonate from the slow **drip** of water. A low **rumble**.
Click — a gun is being cocked to your right.
You spin. You duck. You freeze in fear.
Bullets tear past you and **ricochet** from every angle.

You can't see her, but you know exactly where she is.

Great games deserve great audio. Look for this logo or visit
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Environmental Audio™
by **CREATIVE**®

RANDOM AWARDS

BEST MOD
SOUTH PARK — QUAKE II —➤ Kill Kenny and lose points! Fun and creative

BEST STORY
GRIM FANDANGO —➤ Brilliant, creative, funny, and inventive. Could have used a few more explosions, but we're forgiving

THE "NOT ANOTHER POST-APOCALYPTIC FUTURE" AWARD
POWERSLIDE —➤ Decent game, but why do racing games need a story?

THE WORST BUG
MYTH II —➤ People who got the original could play till their hearts content, just couldn't uninstall it

THE "HEY, THEY STOLE THAT IDEA FROM US" AWARD
DEER AVENGER —➤ We seem to remember doing a feature about games we really want and including a title we called Hunter Hunter. Wonder where they got this idea. Thieves!

THE "NOT ON MY DESKTOP" AWARD
EVERQUEST —➤ Staffers Secretly love this game, but if anyone saw a shortcut on the desktop, the teasing would never end

BEST GRAPHICS

Looks do matter

Any magazine or individual that tells you graphics don't matter is a total and complete liar. Graphics are what draw you into a game and make it believable. Of course graphics aren't everything, as highlighted so tragically by *Trespasser*. If you want something real purty to look at on your PC (other than all the porn you've downloaded from www.pcxl.com) then these are the best of the best.

1. UNREAL
Developer: Epic MegaGames
Publish: GT Interactive

THE LOOK —➤ Colored lighting, amazing textures, wide-open areas, and the best particle effects anywhere make *Unreal* the best looking game ever. Without the amazing graphics that pull you in and make you care about the experience, *Unreal* would be just another *Quake II* wannabe.

Now over 20 games are scheduled to take advantage of the impressive *Unreal* graphics engine and hopefully they will add deeper, more thought-provoking gameplay. *Klingon Honor Guard* is exactly what we DON'T want from *Unreal*-based games.

Unreal | The prettiest thing in '98 that didn't have breasts.

2. HALF-LIFE
Developer: Valve
Publisher: Sierra

THE LOOK —➤ Took elements from the *Quake* and *Quake II* engines and created a gritty real world in which the game majestically unfolds. Incredible variety in levels, great monsters, and amazing damage effects after a particularly nasty deathmatch are a sight to behold.

3. TRESPASSER
Developer: Dreamworks
Publisher: Dreamworks

THE LOOK —➤ No game looks better in still screenshots. However, the disappointing (but not 'retarded' — that's not PC, and we are certainly very PC) gameplay and horrible framerates make *Trespasser* a poster child for the 'looks aren't everything' telethon.

BEST SOUND

Aural Pleasure

The most underrated category in all gaming has to be sound. Great sound won't save a bad game, or kill a good one, but great sound is the ingredient that can push a game over the top.

1. HALF-LIFE
Developer: Valve
Publisher: Sierra

SAY WHAT? —➤ The 3D sound is such an aural pleasure and absolutely necessary in finding out where enemies are coming from. The music, effects, and voices all work together to fully immerse the game player into the world of Gordon Freeman.

Half-Life | Whining scientists, in 3D!

2. UNREAL
Developer: Epic
Publisher: GT Interactive

SAY WHAT? —➤ Truly, the first game to utilize 3D sound, *Unreal* combined brilliant theme music and dead-on

sound effects to make the journey through the Nali homeworld even more intense. We are still haunted by the sound of reloading eightball cannons.

3. THIEF: TDP
Developer:
Looking Glass
Publisher: Eidos

SAY WHAT? —➤ Because the game relies on sneaking around, sound is a crucial part of gameplay – step on the wrong surface and the whole world will know you're coming, but keep your ears open and thievery becomes that much easier.

BEST DESIGN

This is what really MAKES the game

Design is what makes games enjoyable, believable, entertaining, or scary. The layout and compatibility of levels, controls, and puzzles is at the very core of what makes a game truly special. You'll note that the three winners here were also 1, 2, 3 for game of the year — this certainly isn't a coincidence.

1. HALF-LIFE
Developer: Valve
Publisher: Sierra

THE LAYOUT···➤ It's obvious from the very beginning of *Half-Life* that much effort and hard work was put into making this complete experience second to none. For the first time ever in a first-person shooter, you aren't required to find a single freakin' colored key card. They should garner the award for this amazing fact alone.

2. STARCRAFT
Developer: Blizzard
Publisher: Blizzard

THE LAYOUT···➤ The key to a great realtime strategy game is balance, and no game better illustrates this than *StarCraft*. No matter which race you play there's a way to win. If you want to find out what a monumental task this is, take a look at all the developers attempting to make multi-species games this year, and see how badly they screw up.

3. RAINBOW SIX
Developer: Red Storm
Publisher: Red Storm

THE LAYOUT···➤ No individual element of *Rainbow Six* stands out — it's just a great game. The layout of the levels, the intensity of the showdowns, the thrill of the hunt and the pure fun of "one-shot-and-you're-dead" gameplay.

Half-Life | Out of things to say about this game — It's real good.

BEST DEPTH

Am I still playing the game?

Great depth is what makes a game a classic. Many argue that *Jedi Knight* is one of the best games of all time, but those same people have removed it from their hard drives, while *Quake II* remains. At PCXL we consider the games we won't delete from our hard drives to be the true classics. Here are three examples of games that will remain on board no matter how much other stuff we have to install (Word, Windows, and our CD-ROM drives will go before *Quake II*).

1. STARCRAFT
Developer: Blizzard
Publisher: Blizzard

DEEP!···➤ It's already a year old and no one is even considering removing it from their hard drives. Without solitaire, Windows, and *StarCraft*, the PC just wouldn't seem

StarCraft | An instant classic.

complete. Internet play and the *Brood War* expansion will keep this game going all the way through '99. Hell, this baby would still be getting played even if the expansion pack never came out.

2. HALF-LIFE
Developer: Valve
Publisher: Sierra

DEEP!···➤ The single-player game was long, involving, and difficult (a bit like that last relationship a certain PCXL editor is now over, honest), but what will really keep *Half-Life* on our hard drives for years to come is the impending release of *Team Fortress 2*. As it is, there's still plenty of good straight-up deathmatch out of the box.

3. QUAKE II
Developer: id Software
Publisher: Activision

DEEP!···➤ The game was released in '97, but add-on packs, patches, maps, and mods released in '98 mean that it remains one of the most-played games in the PCXL offices. The only game that will replace it on our hard drives is *Quake III Arena*, and that may not even do the trick (846MB of hard drive space lovingly devoted to this gaming wonder at the moment. We're willing to dump Excel, Word, and Quicken at a moment's notice).

RANDOM AWARDS

MOST THRILLING MOMENT
The grenade kill in *Rainbow Six*. So rare and dangerous that achieving one is truly satisfying (unless you nuke a teammate)

THE "WHAT WERE THEY SMOKING" AWARD
VANGERS···➤ Uhh, we still don't get this game

THE "WHAT WERE WE SMOKING" AWARD
FLESH FEAST···➤ A PCXL rating of 6? Officially the last time we'll be nice to a bad game. Really, we mean it this time

THE BEST PCXL LUNCHTIME INVENTION
CHEESE STICKS DIPPED IN CHEESE SAUCE···➤ Chili's has some delicious cheese sticks, but when dipped in their cheese queso dip, it's in another realm of cheesy goodness

THE BEST SUSAN LUCCI IMPERSONATION
RAINBOW SIX···➤ Nominated in nearly every category, Red Storm's brainchild managed to win nothing. If it's any consolation, they did manage to score best deathmatch level of the year. Being a great game in the same year as *Half-Life* must really suck

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RANDOM
AWARDS

**MOST OUTRAGEOUSLY
OVERDONE USAGE
OF LENS-FLARE**

INCOMING---> Neat trick,
but we've had enough,
thank you

**WORST USE OF THE
UNREAL ENGINE**

TIE - KLINGON HONOR
GUARD and TNN OUT-
DOORS PRO HUNTER --->
At least hunting games
are supposed to suck,
what's KHG's excuse?

**OLDEST ENGINE TO
APPEAR IN GAMES**
The Build engine man-
aged to show up in two of
the worst games of '98 –
it's not the engine's fault
it was developed three
years ago

BEST NEW HARDWARE
RIVA TNT---> Incredibly
fast, with great visual
quality. Almost supplant-
ed the mighty Voodoo 2
chipset, almost

**THE "YOU WON'T CATCH
US DEAD WEARING THIS
DEVICE" AWARD**
VR GEAR HEADSET---> Just
what us hardcore gamers
need – a device to make
us look even geekier

THE BABES OF 1998

Ooh la la!

These women aren't real (we understand that — we really do), but their presence is a nice break from the typical buffed male characters in most games. However, you'll note that none of these polygonal dames were in a game that won an award — proof that PCXL doesn't do all of its thinking below the waist. *Not all!*

GAMING BABE OF THE YEAR
Lara Croft---> *Tomb Raider III*: The original babe is still the best. Her game is getting old, but thankfully polygons aren't affected by gravity. **Elexis Sinclair**---> *Sin*: We like bad girls, and Elexis is really bad. **Allison Huxter**---> *Space Bunnies Must Die*: The only thing worthwhile in this game was Allison.

KIND OF GAME-RELATED BABE OF THE YEAR

Elizabeth Hurley
Game relation---> Rumored to star in *Tomb Raider* movie.
Mila Jovovich
Game relation---> *Fifth Element* used her character from the movie.

Stephanie Seymour
Game relation---> Sister of GT Inter-active PR guy Lance Seymour.

**NON GAME-RELATED
BABE OF THE YEAR**

Denise Richards---> The original PCXL hottie makes games seem unimportant.
Sarah Michelle Gellar---> We had to vote her in or Ed would have whined incessantly.
Salma Hayek---> The saucy Latin actress will never be in a movie we won't go and see.
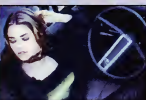
Denise Richards

Sarah Michelle Gellar

Elizabeth Hurley

Salma Hayek

Stephanie Seymour

Lara Croft

XS-SPEED

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RANDOM
AWARDS

BEST WEAPON
The year of 1998 will surely go down as the year the first-person shooter came of age. And while there were no ground-breaking advances in weapon technology, there were definitely some great variations on the classics

#1: SQUEAKY TOY —
SHOGO—> The ultimate taunting weapon has been known to make opponents cry like little girls
#2: LAW —
Half-Life—> The best variation of the Quake rocket launcher releases a guided rocket that rewards careful aim, real skill and, ah yes, luck
#3: FLAK CANNON —
Unreal—> Whether it be the flak grenade to the head, or the shards of metal to the back, two completely different fire modes make this THE close combat weapon in Unreal, bar none
#4: BULLGUT —
Shogo—> A mass of swirling rockets hone in on a target, accompanied by amazing effects

BEST MISSION PACK
STARCRAFT:
BROOD WAR —> Perfectly balanced new units, clever new maps, and all the right gameplay tweaks makes this expansion far better than any of the competing packages. More proof that the official add-on packs are always the best and that Blizzard just can't do anything wrong. Period

BEST NEW PERIPHERAL
LOGITECH WINGMAN
FORMULA FORCE—> Great design, near-perfect force feedback, and the smallest footprint of any desktop driving apparatus makes this the year's best peripheral

BEST DEATHMATCH LEVEL

The key to a great DM level is balance and layout, making for great moments, fair play, and a never-ending variety of various varying results.

1. Amazon — Rainbow Six—> Great layout and close proximity to enemy team make this the ultimate Rainbow Six level and our favorite DM map of the year.
2. Behind Zee Bookcase — Sin—> High-concept deathmatch in a giant den make this well balanced level the highlight of Sin.
3. Sub-transit — Half-Life —> The train of death is an interesting DM twist that made for some great drive-

by firehose of death-ing.
4. DMTundra — Unreal—> The 8-ball, tower, and battles for possession of the best close-range weapons made for some great deathmatching games (over a Local Area Network).
5. Shooting Gallery — Unreal: The award winning PCXL level is mind-boggling to say the least, but the balance and high concept make it one of the best Unreal levels available (maybe we're a bit biased, but

"Amazon" from Rainbow Six | Deadly!

go to www.pcxl.com to download).
All time best—> The Edge — Quake II: The ultimate DM map is used by most PGL participants in qualifying because of its incredible balance. A level that truly shows who is the best at Quake II.

BEST SINGLE-PLAYER LEVEL

The best single-player levels provide a challenging, exciting ride that isn't forgotten after you've finished the game. The equivalent to a great scene in a movie, this is what makes an excellent single-player game.

1. Residue Processing — Half-Life—> You can almost smell the radioactive gunk in the tanks, and the outdoor components, with indoor heavy artillery, made it tops among many memorable moments. High praise, indeed.

2. BioDome - Rainbow Six—> It took PCXL several days and hundreds of soldiers to finally get past the deadly choke points in this level. It required ultimate teamwork, a willingness to sacrifice some expendable teammates, precision shooting, and a peck on the cheek from old lady luck (at least that's who we thought she was).
3. Terran Level 3 — StarCraft—> Defined fear in a realtime strategy level. All you have to do is stay alive for a short time, but before that time is up, you meet the Zerg for the first time, in an enemy rush that makes the Starship Traapers alien attacks look mild.

"Residue Processing" from Half-Life | The best level this year!

BEST 30-MINUTE RUSH

These games may not be the deepest or most well-balanced, but if you've got thirty minutes to kill, this is where you want to spend it.

1. Carmageddon 2—> No better way to get a laugh and get rid of some aggression than tagging pedestrians (and penguins).
2. Quake II—> Over a year old, but nothing takes care of stress better than piling up lunchtime frags in this classic.
3. Matacross Madness—> Not much of a game overall, but the trick mode is always good for shits and giggles. Yeah baby.

Carmageddan 2 | There's only one better way to kill 30 minutes.

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Only Eidos brings in the New Year with a BANG!

WARZONE 2100

REVENANT

LEGACY of KAIN
SOUL REAVER

DAIKATANA

BRAVEHEART

RANDOM AWARDS

PCXL ALL-STARS

BEST SPECIAL EFFECTS
Special effects give weapons their firepower and make the screen light up with action. This is the *Armageddon* of the gaming world; not the best game, but some damn fine-looking explosions

SHOGO—> Every weapon is accompanied by a mind-blowing special effect. It's like watching Saturday morning Japanese cartoons with your finger on the fire button

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
JOHN CARMACK—> How could we have an All-PCXL team without codemaster Carmack? Well, he hasn't released a game this year so he can't legally make the team. However, his contributions to the computer game community make him worthy of the first ever PCXL Lifetime Achievement Award. *Doom, Quake, Quake II*, low-lag internet play, and countless games are all around because of John Carmack. His programming is the standard by which all other programmers are judged, and until he says otherwise, he is THE king of action gaming. We've loved playing your games, and we look forward to playing more (At this point, sobbing hysterically makes this award seem much more interesting – go ahead, try it)

We realize that creating games is a team effort, but so is football and they have all-pros. We've looked at the best gaming elements in '99 and picked the men most responsible for them to be All-PCXL. These 11 men have been a big part of making the games that matter, and this is our way of saying thanks for the long nights, hard work, and brilliant ideas. As with any list of this type we are no doubt leaving out hundreds of talented, tireless minions. For this we apologize.

Enough with lame excuses, and on to the best of the best. Raise a glass of beer and give a toast to the **Superstars of Gaming 1998!** Hell, even if you've never heard of these guys, raise a glass of beer anyway. It's bound to be happy hour somewhere in the world.

Grim Fandango | Deep!

Story Writer: Tim Schaeffer – Lucas Arts – *Grim Fandango*
WHY HIM?—> There is no game on the PC with a more creative or intriguing story than *Grim Fandango*. All of the stereotypical game scenarios were thrown out and an amazing tale was woven. With *Grim* and *Full Throttle* under his belt, Tim can write our game story anytime he wants.

Artificial Intelligence: Jay Stelly and Steve Bond – Valve – *Half-Life*
WHY THEM?—> Every character in *Half-Life* is alive with its own intelligence. Not every character is smart, which makes the whole experience that much better. The variety in AI is the best we've seen in any game.

Art Designer: Peter Tsacle – Lucas Arts – *Grim Fandango*
WHY HIM?—> Great graphics are all done with technology and programming, but great art direction is an entirely different technicolor beast. *Grim Fandango* has a completely unique look that carries over from scene to scene, and the characters are quirky, lovable and spooky all at the same time.

Network Programmer: Mark Frohmeyer – Dynamix – *Tribes*
WHY HIM?—> *Tribes* looks great, and has an astoundingly unique approach, but without the silky-smooth internet code, no one would care. This is the smoothest online game anywhere, and with massive servers springing up all over the net, it's getting a mighty good test. From what we've seen,

Unreal | Great code!

Programmer: Tim Sweeney – Epic MegaGames – *Unreal*
WHY HIM?—> Created the amazing *Unreal* engine and took PC gaming graphics to a new level of detail. The internet code never got completely fixed, but his work on the *Unreal* engine was extraordinary. He is largely considered one of the two best programmers in the business, and in 1998 he was in a class of his own.

Project Lead: Gabe Newell – Valve – *Half-Life*
WHY HIM?—> So many things were right with *Half-Life* that it's hard to pick just one area, which is why we've picked the head honcho at Valve. When so many things go right, you know that the man in charge is top-notch. Recognition of talent and dedication to delivering a great product have made Valve one of the very best.

Game Concept: Brian Upton – Red Storm – *Rainbow Six*
WHY HIM?—> He's the man who carried through the game concept of *Rainbow Six*. Red Storm had never really done anything notable until this game, but the new gaming paradigm (ooh, the big word yet again) set by this title will forever change the games we play.

even the mighty *Quake II* internet code isn't this good.

Game Designer: Tim Stellmach - Looking Glass – *Thief*
WHY HIM?—> We were as surprised as anyone at the quality of *Thief*, and the pacing, level design, and balance all played a big part in the excitement of the game. Being the lead designer on the project, he had a big hand in making this an award-winning game.

Level Designer: Scott Youngblood – Dynamix – *Tribes*
WHY HIM?—> Until *Tribes*, most level design consisted of a series of corridors. The rolling hills, interior structures and perfectly balanced levels make the massively multiplayer *Tribes* a truly unique experience. Had these levels been set in your typical Rocket Arena-type level, the game wouldn't be worth mentioning.

Game Balance: Rob Pardot – Blizzard – *StarCraft*
WHY HIM?—> Known throughout the industry as the balance expert, you need look no further than the meticulous balancing of the three races in *StarCraft* to see how important Rob's work has been. For multiplayer games, especially realtime strategy games, unit balance is the difference between a *StarCraft* and a *Max II*.

Rainbow Six | Pretty music

Music Composer: Soundelux – *Rainbow Six*
WHY THEM?—> The epic soundtrack that nearly brings tears to TK-ers eyes is easily the most memorable score in all of gaming. This company also worked on movies such as *Braveheart* and *The Rock*. You may remember the music as that other stuff between big explosions and Scottish arses. These guys and gals are true professionals that know how to match music to content.

IN TEN YEARS...

These are the images from 1998 that will stick in our minds.

HALF-LIFE

UNREAL

North Tower for the Blood Eagle ... an objective.

TRIBES

STARCRAFT

Terran Science Vessel
Detector
Kills: 1

The Clinton Memorial

The Full Monty

PCXL GOES ALL THE WAY!

Following is a list of every single game *PCXL* has ever reviewed. Consider this the ultimate list of lists, the supreme guide to all your PC gaming needs. With this list and a couple of million dollars you could become a major player in the games industry. Without the 2 million, you're shit out of luck.
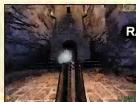
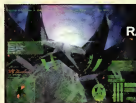## THE BABES

Forsaken
RATING 8

DEVELOPER → Probe
PUBLISHER → Acclaim
UNDER THE THONG → The Suzanne Sommers of games: beautiful, but not a lot going on above the neck.

Unreal
RATING 9

DEVELOPER → Epic Megagames
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
UNDER THE THONG → *Unreal* is to games what Supermodels are to girlfriends. Just get the latest patch for multiplayer luv.

Descent Freespace: The Great War
RATING 8

DEVELOPER → Volition
PUBLISHER → Interplay
UNDER THE THONG → So much like *Wing Commander*, we hoped Ginger Lynn Allen would show up and help our "deployment."

Need for Speed III: Hot Pursuit
RATING 8

DEVELOPER → Electronic Arts
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts
UNDER THE THONG → She's fast and she knows what you want. Driving sims have never been so damn good.

Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines
RATING 8

DEVELOPER → Pyro Studios
PUBLISHER → Eidos Interactive
UNDER THE THONG → It's a military RTS and a damn fine one. Is there a problem?

Delta Force
RATING 8

DEVELOPER → NovaLogic
PUBLISHER → NovaLogic
UNDER THE THONG → *Goldeneye* and *Rainbow Six* have a torrid love affair and give birth to a healthy baby *Delta Force*.

Shogo: Mobile Armor Division
RATING 8

DEVELOPER → Monolith
PUBLISHER → Monolith
UNDER THE THONG → Getting more attention than Calista Flockhart at an all-you-can-eat buffet. Hot engine and great weapons.

Dethkarz
RATING 8

DEVELOPER → Beam Software
PUBLISHER → GT Affiliates
UNDER THE THONG → *Wipeou ... err ... Dethkarz* is slightly derivative, but will make you its bitch.

NHL '99
RATING 9

DEVELOPER → EA Sports
PUBLISHER → EA Sports
UNDER THE THONG → Hockey so good, you'll never even look at another game. Until *NHL 2000* comes to town.

Sin
RATING 8

DEVELOPER → Ritual Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Activision
UNDER THE THONG → Wendy Whoppers has nothing on Elexis Sinclaire. Oh, and there's a damn good first-person shooter here, too.

Fallout 2
RATING 9

DEVELOPER → Black Isle Studios
PUBLISHER → Interplay
UNDER THE THONG → Finally, a game that puts the "role-playing" back into RPG and gives Interplay something to be happy about.

Grim Fandango
RATING 9

DEVELOPER → LucasArts
PUBLISHER → LucasArts
UNDER THE THONG → Graphic adventure that makes dead people cool. And you don't even have to shoot them first.

Blood II: The Chosen
RATING 8

DEVELOPER → Monolith
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
UNDER THE THONG → Caleb returns to kick your ass again and again. Tough, but all the bloodletting is worth it.

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Links LS '99
RATING 9

DEVELOPER → Access Software
PUBLISHER → Access Software
UNDER THE THONG → The golf game to which all others aspire. Approaches the real thing in terms of really realistic realism.

NFL Blitz
RATING 8

DEVELOPER → Point of View
PUBLISHER → Midway Entertainment
UNDER THE THONG → Not real football, but this arcade port is extremely fun to play.

Heretic II
RATING 5

DEVELOPER → Raven Software
PUBLISHER → Activision
UNDER THE THONG → A rare sequel that answers the question "What happens when you piss off an elf?"

Thief: The Dark Project
RATING 9

DEVELOPER → Looking Glass
PUBLISHER → Eidos Interactive
UNDER THE THONG → A cool action/adventure game that emphasizes (surprise!) thievery over killing.

King's Quest: Mask of Eternity
RATING 8

DEVELOPER → Sierra Studios
PUBLISHER → Sierra Studios
UNDER THE THONG → This ain't your daddy's game. The series has exploded into 3D, yet retains the flavor of its predecessors.

Half-Life
RATING 11

DEVELOPER → Valve
PUBLISHER → Sierra
UNDER THE THONG → Hey, that 11 out of 10 rating isn't a joke. Run out and buy it now or we'll make you play *Redneck Deer Huntin'*.

SILICON VALLEYS

Quake II: The Reckoning
RATING 7

DEVELOPER → Xatrix
PUBLISHER → Id/Activision
VICTORIA'S SECRET → Gibs and lots of 'em. More difficult than the original, but still packed with *Quake II* goodness.

Age of Empires: The Rise of Rome
RATING 8

DEVELOPER → Ensemble Studios
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
VICTORIA'S SECRET → The Mother of All Expansion Packs ... kinda like Madonna while nursing (well, not that good).

Quake II: Ground Zero
RATING 7

DEVELOPER → Rogue Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Activision
VICTORIA'S SECRET → What can we say? More *Quake II*, deathmatch, killing, yadda, yadda, yadda ...

Wing Commander Prophecy: Secret Ops
RATING 7

DEVELOPER → Origin
PUBLISHER → Origin
VICTORIA'S SECRET → Less of a new game than an apology for *Ultima Online*, this freebie is well worth the download time.

Spec Ops: Ranger Team Bravo
RATING 5

DEVELOPER → Zombie
PUBLISHER → Ripcord Games
VICTORIA'S SECRET → This add-on supplies much needed multiplayer support, but the execution of an intriguing design stinks.

SPORTY, YET SPICY

Triple Play '99
RATING 7

DEVELOPER → EA Sports
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts
JOCK BITCH → Umm ... not much different than *Triple Play '98*, and not the best baseball game anymore.

World Cup '98
RATING 8

DEVELOPER → EA Sports
PUBLISHER → EA Sports
JOCK BITCH → The best soccer game we've seen this year. Too bad the onlookers don't riot (in the game or the office).

Fox Sports Soccer '99
RATING 5

DEVELOPER → Gremlin Interactive
PUBLISHER → Fox Sports
JOCK BITCH → Low on realism, but it may satisfy arcade fans. And the onlookers still don't riot.

GameDay '99
RATING 8

DEVELOPER → 989 Studios
PUBLISHER → 989 Studios
JOCK BITCH → Shows us that not all the good football games are done on consoles (sometimes they port 'em over).

Fox Sports Golf '99
RATING 4

DEVELOPER → Gremlin
PUBLISHER → Fox Interactive
JOCK BITCH → Fox has done the impossible – made golf more frustrating.

Game, Net & Match

RATING 6

DEVELOPER → MediaGAMES
PUBLISHER → Blue Byte
JOCK BITCH → Dull and uninspired. The game, that is ... and tennis in general.

Tiger Woods Golf '99

RATING 7

DEVELOPER → EA Sports
PUBLISHER → EA Sports
JOCK BITCH → Not up to *Links* quality, but the license adds some wacky moves like the Tiger Shot and Tiger Charge.

NCAA Football '99

RATING 7

DEVELOPER → Tiberon
PUBLISHER → EA Sports
JOCK BITCH → EA tackles *GameDay 99* with this impressive entry. If you like college ball, that is.

Peter Jacobsen Golden Tee Golf

RATING 7

DEVELOPER → Incredible Technologies
PUBLISHER → Incredible Technologies
JOCK BITCH → An arcade golf game that's perfect when you want to turn off your brain and hook tee shots around a cow.

Madden '99

RATING 7

DEVELOPER → Tiberon
PUBLISHER → EA Sports
JOCK BITCH → A major improvement from last year's *Madden*, but still can't match *NCAA 99* or *GameDay 99*.

VR Baseball 2000

RATING 6

DEVELOPER → VR Sports
PUBLISHER → Interplay
JOCK BITCH → Question: If Interplay couldn't get the year right, then how can we expect much from the game? Answer: we can't.

NBA Live '99

RATING 8

DEVELOPER → EA Sports
PUBLISHER → EA Sports
JOCK BITCH → So realistic you'll be looking for illegitimate children cheering for their deadbeat dads.

SMART 'N SASSY

Incoming

RATING 8

DEVELOPER → Rage
PUBLISHER → Rage
THE LAP DANCE → Shoot at things ... stuff goes "boom" ... pure satisfaction.

MechCommander

RATING 8

DEVELOPER → FASA Interactive
PUBLISHER → Microprose
THE LAP DANCE → "Hey, you got your RPG in my RTS ... mmmm, tasty!"

X-COM: Interceptor

RATING 6

DEVELOPER → Microprose
PUBLISHER → Microprose
THE LAP DANCE → Intense resource management drags down what could've been a good space combat game.

Dominion: Storm Over Gift 3

RATING 6

DEVELOPER → Ion Storm
PUBLISHER → Eidos Interactive
THE LAP DANCE → Too little, too late. There are better RTS games so why not play *Star-Craft* or *TA* instead?

Urban Assault

RATING 7

DEVELOPER → Terratools
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
THE LAP DANCE → Ooh, it crosses popular genres, which is evidently confusing and bland all at the same time.

Wargames

RATING 7

DEVELOPER → Interactive Studios
PUBLISHER → MGM Interactive
THE LAP DANCE → Standard RTS fare with a movie license. Wait a minute ... where's Ally Sheedy and Matthew Broderick?

Dune 2000

RATING 6

DEVELOPER → Westwood Studios
PUBLISHER → Westwood Studios
THE LAP DANCE → Merely an updated version of the original *Dune*, this C&C clone's not worth it unless you love either a lot.

Spearhead

RATING 7

DEVELOPER → MAK Technologies
PUBLISHER → Interactive Magic
THE LAP DANCE → More for action lovers than tank sim fanatics. And that's just how we like it.

KKND 2: Krossfire

RATING 7

DEVELOPER → Beam Software
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
THE LAP DANCE → Not bad, but how many damn RTS titles do we need? *KKND* stands for Kash Kow Needs Duplicating.

Rage of Mages
RATING (7)

DEVELOPER → Buca Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Monolith
THE LAP DANCE → If you're looking for D&D instead of T&A, then this action-RPG will fill your needs.

Global Domination
RATING (8)

DEVELOPER → Psygnosis
PUBLISHER → Psygnosis
THE LAP DANCE → Though not a leather S&M fantasy, this RTS will make you want to take over the world.

Redguard
RATING (7)

DEVELOPER → Bethesda Softworks
PUBLISHER → Bethesda Softworks
THE LAP DANCE → The newest Elder Scrolls game, although the style may remind you of a certain tomb-raiding heroine.

Cyberstrike 2
RATING (6)

DEVELOPER → Simutronics Corp.
PUBLISHER → 989 Studios
THE LAP DANCE → A giant robot sim that still can't match the Mechwarrior 2 legacy.

Future Cop
RATING (7)

DEVELOPER → Electronic Arts
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts
THE LAP DANCE → The plot is a cliché but criminal-killing mayhem is good for some simple, explosive laughs.

RACY AND RAW

Monster Truck Madness 2
RATING (6)

DEVELOPER → Terminal Reality
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
UNDERCOVER INFO → Microsoft knows a lot about "crashes" but still couldn't make monster trucks fun.

Redline Racer
RATING (7)

DEVELOPER → Criterion Studios
PUBLISHER → Ubi Soft
UNDERCOVER INFO → Beautiful, curvy and you can almost picture it at an arcade. A bit generic other than sharp graphics.

Motocross Madness
RATING (7)

DEVELOPER → Rainbow Studios
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
UNDERCOVER INFO → Another mediocre addition to Microsoft's "Madness" series except with motorbikes and some cool tricks.

TOCA: Championship Racing
RATING (7)

DEVELOPER → Codemasters
PUBLISHER → 3DO
UNDERCOVER INFO → The Kate Jackson of racing games: not the prettiest one out there, but the superb AI makes up for it.

Motorhead
RATING (5)

DEVELOPER → Gremlin Interactive
PUBLISHER → Fox Interactive
UNDERCOVER INFO → Much like a porn .gif—cool to look at, but there's nothing really there to "interact" with.

Grand Prix Legends
RATING (7)

DEVELOPER → Papyrus
PUBLISHER → Sierra Sports
UNDERCOVER INFO → Only for those who enjoy annoyingly hardcore racing sims. Mmm ... hardcore ...

Monaco Grand Prix
RATING (8)

DEVELOPER → Ubi Soft
PUBLISHER → Ubi Soft
UNDERCOVER INFO → No licensing to be found and it's made by the French but, damn, it's still a great racing sim.

Test Drive Off-Road 2
RATING (4)

DEVELOPER → Accolade
PUBLISHER → Accolade
UNDERCOVER INFO → The licensed extras are more exciting than the game. Racing isn't supposed to be this boring.

Moto Racer 2
RATING (8)

DEVELOPER → Delphine Software
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts
UNDERCOVER INFO → Down and dirty motorcycle excitement awaits you in this entertaining sequel.

Speed Busters: American Highways
RATING (7)

DEVELOPER → Ubi Soft
PUBLISHER → Ubi Soft
UNDERCOVER INFO → Dinosaurs in a racing game? Not much strategy here, but it's got some wickedly creative tracks.

Powerslide
RATING (7)

DEVELOPER → Ratbag Games
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
UNDERCOVER INFO → You slide more than steer which makes the sim-like physics a hindrance, albeit a highly entertaining one.

http://[scar.com]

Test Drive 5

RATING 4

DEVELOPER → Accolade
PUBLISHER → Accolade
UNDERCOVER INFO → A console port that doesn't realize the PC can make it better, faster, stronger and won't cost $6 million.

Viper Racing

RATING 8

DEVELOPER → MGI
PUBLISHER → Sierra Sports
UNDERCOVER INFO → One of the few racers that manages to integrate arcade fun and hardcore sim physics into one package.

THE AIRHEADS

Jane's WWII Fighters

RATING 9

DEVELOPER → Jane's
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts
TASSEL TWIRL → Jane's rep as one of the best flight sim makers goes unchallenged here with another winner.

European Air War

RATING 8

DEVELOPER → Microprose
PUBLISHER → Microprose
TASSEL TWIRL → A forgiving flight model allows this game to be more fun than hardcore – PCXL officially approves.

Microsoft Combat Flight Simulator

RATING 6

DEVELOPER → Microsoft
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
TASSEL TWIRL → Its backward compatibility with *MS Flight Simulator* is the highlight of this so-so sim.

Red Baron 3-D

RATING 6

DEVELOPER → Dynamix
PUBLISHER → Sierra
TASSEL TWIRL → Muuuuch better than *RB2* but *Flying Corp Gold* is still the better WWI flight sim.

Warbirds

RATING 7

DEVELOPER → I-Magic Online
PUBLISHER → I-Magic Online
TASSEL TWIRL → The software is free but it costs $2 an hour to play this online-only game. Addiction could be expensive.
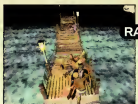
Fighter Pilot: Ready, Aim, Fire

RATING 3

DEVELOPER → Electronic Arts
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts
TASSEL TWIRL → It's only $20 so don't expect much. Ready, aim, and fire are all the instructions you'll need.

SCARY BUT DO-ABLE

Flesh Feast

RATING 6

DEVELOPER → Ingames Interactive
PUBLISHER → Segasoft
THE STRIPTEASE → Zombies are cool and ugly. This game, though not so cool, is, however, very ugly.
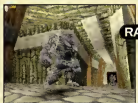
Vangers

RATING 6

DEVELOPER → K-D Lab
PUBLISHER → Interactive Magic
THE STRIPTEASE → What the hell? We've played it and we're still confused. *Starship Troopers* without the license or Denise Richards.

Return Fire 2

RATING 5

DEVELOPER → Silent Software
PUBLISHER → Ripcord
THE STRIPTEASE → War is hell. So is this game, and we don't mean that in a good way.

Deathtrap Dungeon

RATING 5

DEVELOPER → Eidos
PUBLISHER → Eidos
THE STRIPTEASE → More gore than good gameplay. Red Lotus is Lara in leather (it takes work to screw that combo up).

Enemy Infestation

RATING 7

DEVELOPER → Micro Forte
PUBLISHER → Ripcord
THE STRIPTEASE → Alien bugs attack! You kill them, isometrically! Sound familiar?

Klingon Honor Guard

RATING 6

DEVELOPER → Microprose
PUBLISHER → Microprose
THE STRIPTEASE → Not as scary as *Klingon Holi Designer*, and doesn't make full use of the *Unreal* engine.

Barrage

RATING 6

DEVELOPER → Mango Grits
PUBLISHER → Activision
THE STRIPTEASE → A great game for the recently lobotomized: Fly and shoot anything that moves.

Trespasser

RATING 5

DEVELOPER → Dreamworks
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts
THE STRIPTEASE → Like most strippers, this one didn't live up to expectations. Notable only for the fact that looking at breasts is necessary to survive.

38

Fatal Abyss
RATING 6

DEVELOPER → Human Soft
PUBLISHER → SegaSoft
THE STRIPTEASE → It sounds like a Cinemax Friday night skin flick, but it's really just a mediocre submarine action game.

Space Bunnies Must Die
RATING 4

DEVELOPER → Jinx
PUBLISHER → Ripcord Games
THE STRIPTEASE → A bad console game that had some good ingredients, but blended together into an unrecognizable mess.

Carmageddon 2
RATING 7

DEVELOPER → Stainless Software
PUBLISHER → Interplay
THE STRIPTEASE → Has some control problems, but perfect for burning off pent-up "road rage."

Tomb Raider III
RATING 5

DEVELOPER → Core Design
PUBLISHER → Eidos
THE STRIPTEASE → Lara still holds a very special place in our ... err ... hearts, but this series needs a new engine in a big way.

THE SKANKS

Redneck Rampage Rides Again
RATING 2

DEVELOPER → Xatrix
PUBLISHER → Interplay
SLOPPY SECONDS → Getting drunk first doesn't help. Really, we tried.

Microsoft Baseball 3D
RATING 3

DEVELOPER → Wizbang!
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
SLOPPY SECONDS → So bad it can't be considered a Jock. We're glad that Wizbang! didn't develop Windows 98 – or did they?

Get Medieval
RATING 3

DEVELOPER → Monolith
PUBLISHER → Monolith
SLOPPY SECONDS → It's like the retarded, drooling half-brother that Gauntlet never had (or wanted).

Nam
RATING 2

DEVELOPER → Two Finnish Guys
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
SLOPPY SECONDS → Hmm...let's take a five year-old engine and release a new game! The horror... my God, the horror...

Redneck Deer Huntin'
RATING 1

DEVELOPER → Xatrix
PUBLISHER → Interplay
SLOPPY SECONDS → Remember, never buy any game which has the words "Redneck," "Deer," or "Huntin'" in the title.

Sensible Soccer 98
RATING 3

DEVELOPER → Sensible Software
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
SLOPPY SECONDS → Not even a real Brit would touch this dreck. We'd rather snog a wild boar in heat.

Dominant Species
RATING 3

DEVELOPER → Red Storm
PUBLISHER → Red Storm
SLOPPY SECONDS → The word "crap" doesn't even begin to adequately describe this game. "Crayola crayon-infested dog crap" does.

Gunmetal
RATING 4

DEVELOPER → Mad Genius Software
PUBLISHER → Mad Genius Software
SLOPPY SECONDS → A game that has it all: bugs, a DOS interface, and outdated graphics. Let us know when it's finished.

Skiing '99
RATING 3

DEVELOPER → Dynamix
PUBLISHER → Sierra
SLOPPY SECONDS → Should've been named Skiing 98.1 since any "improvements" are minimal.

FUTURAMA

Our predictions for future games based on current trends

Deer Fighter 3D
RATING → 8
DEVELOPER → Capcom
PUBLISHER → Capcom
IN THE FUTURE → Bambi kicks some hunter ass before performing an "antlerality" on the bastard who shot his mother.

Barbie's Fashion Safari
RATING → 3
DEVELOPER → Mattel
PUBLISHER → The Learnin' Company
IN THE FUTURE → Barbie's hunting for new clothes and she doesn't care who she has to take out to get them. Ballroom Gown Kick had better watch out!

'Nade
RATING → 2
DEVELOPER → Two High Guys
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
IN THE FUTURE → Relive the horrors of battle in this two-level 3D shooting sim of the prettiest armed conflict of the '80s. Grenada.

Microsoft Flight Attendant Simulator
RATING → 11
DEVELOPER → Dreamworks
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
IN THE FUTURE → Fluff pillows! Take

drink orders! Say "buh-bye" to 200 passengers as they deplane. Look down at your breasts to see your life meter!

Redneck Honor Guard: The Dark Deliverance
RATING → 5
DEVELOPER → Xatrix
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts
IN THE FUTURE → Crazed hillbillies prove they're a danger to themselves and others in this hunt for the creamy white thighs of Ned Beatty.

John Romero's Moby Dick
RATING → 7
DEVELOPER → Ion Storm
PUBLISHER → Eidos Interactive
IN THE FUTURE → The Quake engine is pulled out of the mothballs one more time as John Romero single-handedly designs the first 3D shoot starring a whale.

Half-Price
RATING → 9
DEVELOPER → Valve
PUBLISHER → Fisher-Price
IN THE FUTURE → The first budget 3D-action game released with the full support of Sam Joseph Lieberman, designed for PC gamers under the age of 12. Some assembly required.

How to get
A JOB
in the GAMES INDUSTRY

So you want to be a player? Get a job in the business.

BY CHRIS HUDAK

Repeat this mantra to yourself throughout this article: "Play your games and the rest will follow."

My name is Chris Hudak. I'm a writer and game reviewer. Yours truly, a chronic sinner in the eyes of "Those Who Decree the Editorial Deadlines," ended up taking a Danteaen excursion through the infernal funnel of the games industry to answer the burning question, "How the hell do I get a job in computer games?"

Boil it down, and there are four reasonably noble things you can do with computer games: Make 'em, push 'em, review 'em or play 'em (we won't even discuss retail sales). The overwhelming consensus we encountered in conversations with experts in these broad realms was simple and encouraging, and curiously repetitive: If you know and love your games, go for it, and don't sweat the formal stuff.

Having advanced technical expertise in management, programming, computer modeling, music, art and business will always be a plus, but enthusiasm for (and understanding of) what makes games good is still the center of gravity. Happily, there are lots of people out there willing to pay you for the high-tech vice of your choice, even if you start with nothing even close to a degree. Read on.

GAME DESIGNER

WHAT YOU'LL NEED→ Games on the brain. The ability to think, sleep, eat, drink, and piss games, 24/7. Many hopefuls *think* that they have this ability, only to slam into a mental titanium wall once they realize that every aspect of their vague soft-focus "game concept" must be constantly retooled – user interface, play balance, storyline, the works. Solid backgrounds in programming, 3D modeling and anima-

tion programs such as 3D Studio Max or Lightwave never hurt anybody, but if the central, engrossing game concept isn't there, you can forget the game jobs and send your high-tech resume to General Mills. Like the saying goes, you can't polish a turd.

WHAT YOU'LL DO→ Everything, and then some. You'll come up with the central game vision, and document every last aspect in design bibles. You'll learn to be an effective member of a team, because sooner or later everybody – even the guy who writes the game manual – will become a part of the process. And, you'll keep a paranoid eye on what every other game maker is turning out.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE→ Your game becoming a hit – aside from the obvious monetary possibilities of royalty checks and the sheer joy of playing your game. Success could lead to all sorts of possibilities – action figures, movie deals, restaurant openings...

WHAT YOU'LL HATE→ Having to be the guy (or gal) whose name appears all over the blistering reviews when the game tanks; filing for unem-

ALEX GARDEN
CEO, RELIC ENTERTAINMENT

Since the age of 15, Alex Garden has made his living in the games industry, making his way up the ladder from tester to CEO.

The PC gaming industry needs you — so long as you have some kind of useful talent, don't piss off everyone you meet, shower regularly and speak with words of more than one syllable.

Mike's first job: Pumping gas at the seediest downtown station and turning down tricks for gas

"The downside is ... if the game sucks ... you're going to look like a complete schmoe."

ployment; moving to a third-world country under an assumed name.

WHAT YOU'LL MAKE→ With so many variables, this job's income is perhaps the most difficult of the lot to pin, but $18K - 60K starting money is a fair estimate with potential royalty packages built in.

WHO'S DONE IT:

ALEX GARDEN,
CEO, RELIC ENTERTAINMENT

Put the word "CEO" in your mind and Alex Garden isn't the type of guy you'll envision. No bad ties, no pot belly, and no breaths between words. Once you get him talking about games, he's off to the races in a rapid-fire, non-stop patter of game lore, wit, stats, history, opinions, sound effects, expletives, raspberries, anecdotes and many other things there probably aren't words for. Already a gaming veteran at 23, Garden logged hours as a tester at Distinctive Software (his first games job at 15), and head of a QA department, before taking over as lead PlayStation programmer on *Triple Play '98* for EA Canada, Conceptual Interface Devices. ("We made this weird glove interface.") His current venture, Relic Entertainment, is poised to release the much-anticipated *Homeworld* this spring.

HOW TO GET THAT JOB→ "One way you can do it — and this is the way I've seen people do it in the past — is to go out and look at games that are already on the shelf, take them home and play them until you know everything about them. Then dissect them, write a design document as though you were going to design that particular game, but put sidebars in there about how you would have improved certain areas."

"Before you can even design something new, you have to be able to understand the components of something old. Do lots of these, do them con-

stantly. And every time you do one, send it to the company that did the game, and don't stop until someone hires you, because they'll give in eventually. You'll be turning out hundred-page documents for free and sending them to people. The best resume as far as I'm concerned is practical work experience, so for a designer I look at previous design work."

NOW, A TYPICAL DAY→ "You can't just say "designing games." What does that mean? Um, playing *Half-Life*? It depends partly on the kind of game you're designing. If you're working on a baseball title, you're gonna spend a lot of your day catching up on what's going on in the league, reading the stats, making sure your game is as current as anything else out there. You'll be playing the game a lot. Very early on in the development process you spend most of your time doing pre-production work, actually saying what the game is going to be. If it's a creative game that's never been done before, you're kinda pulling it out of your ass, based on brainstorming meetings and whatever the underlying concept is. Once the game is under full production, you spend a lot of time further designing features that you totally forgot about when you designed the game the first time, putting out fires, answering questions that come up, tuning the game, adding more units, levels, whatever. The final part of the game, you spend hyperanalyzing every last piece you possibly can, figuring out how you can tweak this little bit, getting feedback from focus groups, etc."

"I've always said from the beginning that a good idea is a good idea.
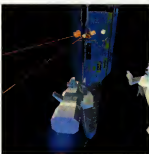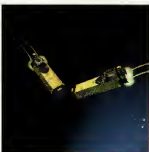
Homeworld has garnered a lot of positive press so far, so Garden shouldn't fear the schmoe tag.

You can tell whether a game's fun or not five minutes after you think up the idea for it and you tell it to somebody. But that's not "it." It's knowing how to take that good idea and turn it into information other people can use. If you have a huge background in programming, art, sound design, and you can't get your ideas across to people, then you're screwed, because she's gonna sit there and do nothing."

"The payoff is that if you do something great, then you get to be the hero, and everybody's gonna give you credit, even though there were 30 people working for two years, and a huge marketing team, and PR force. You're going to be the person who gets the glory for it, fairly or not. Now the downside is that if the game *sucks*, particularly if it's been hyped really well, you're gonna look like a complete schmoe. So it's like you're putting your balls into the chopping block more than anybody else. Secondly, I think you've got more responsibility than any other person on the project. In theory, you make the most money. In theory. Obviously, I haven't practiced that yet ..."

Game design constantly evolves over the production process, often changing dramatically.

PUBLIC RELATIONS/ MARKETING

WHAT YOU'LL NEED--> Organization, people skills and the ability to put your thoughts into words. Your job is to A) make people aware of the games you're representing, B) to make people want to buy them, and occasionally, C) to put the best smiling public relations spin you possibly can on hyper-orgies, botched releases, and delayed launches. A business degree and creative writing skills are a big bonus, but by no means necessary.

WHAT YOU'LL DO--> The database is your *Round Table*, the computer is your horse, and the telephone is your *Excalibur*. You'll spend your days targeting possible outlets for game stories (magazines, television shows, radio spots) calling media people you might know, might not know, or don't want to know; and drafting clever press releases filled with game descriptions, corporate backgrounders, developer bios, and the occasional outright, barefaced lie.

Also, you get to plan all the parties, taking care of every annoying detail. You'll anticipate how much liquor to buy, set up airline reservations; stockpile review products and arrange for a cab ride for the alcoholic freelancer from L.A., so he doesn't end up wiping out a troop of Girl Scouts on the way back to the hotel. Simply put, PEE ARR is the catch-all career.

WHAT YOU'LL HATE--> Getting stuck with a product you *know* sucks, and that everybody else *knows* sucks, and (this is the worst) everybody *knows* you *know* sucks, and having to sing its praises anyway; dealing with abrasive, touchy relationships between developers, editors and other marketing staff.

WHAT YOU'LL MAKE--> Starting Pay: $20K - 40K; after you get known and popular in the business and the head hunters begin their incessant, incestuous rounds, the rest is up to you.

> ## "PR boils down to relationships ... that, and perhaps not being afraid to make cold calls. Your fundamental job is doing a lot of mailing and contacting."

WHO'S DONE IT:

GENEVIEVE OSTERGARD,

PUBLIC RELATIONS, SIERRA STUDIOS, (FORMERLY OF ZIFF DAVIS, INTERPLAY PRODUCTIONS)

Genevieve Ostergard has made the rounds at a number of major publishers. She "gets" games, and editors everywhere would pay good money for a contact like that, if they had any money, that is.

PR is easier and tougher with *Half-Life*. Everyone wants an exclusive, but only PCXL scores one!

HOW TO GET THAT JOB--> "It's not so much your education; sure it helps to have a degree, but it's not necessary. Getting a job in games PR specifically, you need first to be a gamer. You need to be aware of what games and gamers are about."

"I have a degree in communications and film. What really helped me — and I think it would really help those who want to get into this industry — was being a journalist. It helped me have perspective. If there can be an internship while you're in school, or an opportunity to write freelance for one of the magazines, that would help immensely. As far as getting a job, you've just got to get a shot at one of the game companies. I will be eternally grateful to Brian Fargo and Kirk Green (of Interplay Productions) for giving me my first shot. You do need to be reasonably high-tech — you need to know what a Voodoo 2 card does. You have to understand the lingo. All of that comes with being a gamer; reading the web sites and the magazines will definitely help."

"In marketing positions, and PR is considered marketing, it would help to have a degree in the marketing field, of course. 80% of the day I spend on the phone and on e-mail dealing with the press. It's very important to love writing and be good at it. A degree in English would be great, too."

The pros, for me, are my dealings with the press. (NOTE: not all PR people feel this way.) The highs: I get paid a good salary, and landing a cover story or a story in *USA Today*, for example, is more thrilling than you can imagine. Those are the peaks. Now, some of the valleys: I don't know if I want to say this, but some of the, ah, *challenges* that I face revolve around dealing with marketing. Making sure that marketing is happy and the press is happy ... and also the developers, of course. Making sure that all my 'clients' are happy."

"What PR boils down to is relationships ... that, and perhaps not being afraid to make cold calls. Your fundamental job is doing a lot of mailing and contacting. In my experience, it's fun right away. You get invited to all the parties, you go on press tours occasionally, you get to write, you get to deal with the press."

GENEVIEVE OSTERGARD
PUBLIC RELATIONS, SIERRA STUDIOS

Contrary to popular belief, some PR people, such as Genevieve Ostergard, believe working with the press is one of the "perks" of her job. Gosh darnit, people really do like us.

DEMONSTRATION #2:

(1) Tear out your old sound card.

(2) Smash into pieces.

(3) Toss over your shoulder.

▶ The sound those pieces make when they hit the ground all *around* you is the power of A3D from Aureal, the only audio that works the way your ears do.

That's why leading sound card vendors, such as Diamond, TerraTec, Turtle Beach, and Xitel, are using Vortex audio technology from Aureal, the only 3D audio accelerator that supports industry leading A3D positional audio technology.

You can also find A3D positional audio on computer models from the industry's leading PC manufacturers.

Audio based on Aureal technology is awesome. But don't take our word for it. Believe Your Ears. Check out A3D at your local retailer.

A3D

BELIEVE YOUR EARS™

Visit us at www.A3D.com

PROGRAMMER/ CODER

WHAT YOU'LL NEED--〉 According to Mark Randell of Terminal Reality Inc., some of the best programmers have little or no college at all, while some hold advanced graduate degrees.

WHAT YOU'LL DO--〉 What you do will depend on where your talents lay. Games are divided into several portions: 2D code (overlays, bitmaps, cockpits), 3D code (weapons, actors, special effects), simulation code (driving a monster truck, flying a plane, or simulating body parts as they fly off of zombies), UI [user interface] code (getting into the game, connecting multiplayer sessions, options menus), sound code, AI code (non-player characters or enemies, pathfinding), game editor code, etc. And then there's the actual game engine itself, which hooks all of this stuff together.

At companies like TRI, beginners take on easier tasks like writing portions of the game editor. As they get experienced, they start to design and maintain shared sections (or systems) of code, like sound engine code, or modeling code. The lead programmer on the project usually does engine coding. He/she is a seasoned veteran with a few titles behind them — somebody that knows the process of creating a game from an idea all the way to the debugging and the release process.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE--〉 The satisfaction of seeing your title on the shelves at CompUSA or Best Buy, as well as the feeling of accomplishment of doing something bigger than just yourself.

WHAT YOU'LL HATE--〉 The long hours. It takes an extraordinary effort to make a good title. It can

" Tricks and secrets of the trade are passed down by experienced people to the newer people ..."

take over 18 months of work to release a game.

WHAT YOU'LL MAKE--〉 This largely corresponds to the individual's talent and experience level, and throughout the industry. A steady paycheck is much more important than a high salary from a company that might not be around tomorrow. Very few games make back their advances, so working for a proven game company is a lot less risky. Starting pay is likely to be in the $40K-plus area.

WHO'S DONE IT:

MARK RANDELL,
TERMINAL REALITY, INC.

After graduating from University of Illinois with a BS in Computer Engineering, Mark started out working for a lesser-known company called BAO in Champaign, IL, who wrote *Flight Simulator* for Microsoft, where he started writing add-on programs for *Flight Simulator*, then worked his way up the chain of command to become
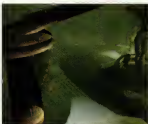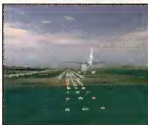
Keeping up with the technology likely to be around when your game ships is absolutely vital.

the lead programmer and co-producer of *Flight Simulator 5.0*. After leaving BAO to finish his Masters Degree in Electrical Engineering, Mark co-founded Terminal Reality Inc. to design his own game — *Terminal Velocity, CART Precision Racing* and *Monster Truck Madness 1 & 2*, to name a few.

HOW TO GET THE JOB--〉 "When hiring someone to work at TRI, they like to see demo programs of what that person is capable of. If they have good demo programs of their abilities, then they are a good candidate for a game developer. Also, they must have the ability to work in a team. Seeing what the person is capable of doing is more important than any resume or degree."

"Game coding is much like an apprenticeship. Tricks and secrets of the trade are passed down by experienced people to the newer people. Only by apprenticing long enough are you ready to be coding a game yourself."

MARK RANDELL
TERMINAL REALITY, INC

While massive publishers gobble up all the new development start-ups, there are still plenty of people with strong resumes setting out on their own. Randel did his work in the trenches before breaking out with TRI.

GAME JOURNALISM/ WRITING

WHAT YOU'LL NEED--} The machine in your home to run the games, and the machine in your head to convey their worth to your readers. Pick up a few gaming pubs and get an idea of the guidelines — the lengths, the writing styles, the lingo, the rating scales. Not many game industry journalists are what you'd call masters of ecstatic prose, but the ones who keep their jobs know how to describe the look, feel and value of a game. The better ones have been playing games for years, and can write about them with a sense of context and even something like history. The best games writers inject their own style and wit, even when their editors ask them to, for God's sake, please stop doing so. The rest write for Ziff.

WHAT YOU'LL DO--} About what you'd expect — play games and write about them. How easy was the game to load? Was there a decent tutorial? Was the control frustrating? Did the sound suck? If you're in-house, you'll likely play the game on different systems, noting video/sound card performance differences. If you're freelancing, you can set your own hours, but a whole new set of responsibilities lands on you, such as doing your own research and making sure you stay on the product lists for various companies. Once again, this means people skills — so make sure you get out of the house once in a while.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE--} It sounds pathetic, but it has to be said: Free games! More games than you can play, in fact. You're getting *paid* to play games — what more do you want? (Yeah, yeah, I know - see "Game Designer," earlier). When travelling to see developers and "work," you'll eat great food in places that sell postcards. You will be exposed to more alcohol than you could ever afford, or indeed survive. And don't get me started on Frequent Flyer miles.

WHAT YOU'LL HATE--} Freelance or in-house, you're going to get stuck playing games you hate. You will play games that are so bad that you'll look back on a gaming session and think, "There went two hours of my life that I will never get back." And then there's the pay.

WHAT YOU'LL MAKE: Freelancing depends on how much regular work you can get for organizations that pay well. In-house, there aren't many opportunities and a huge, willing pool of people to do the jobs. Traditionally, starting salaries in California are around $20K - $30k, aka crap.

"The years I'd spent thumbing my nose at corporate status reports finally paid off ... I've never looked back ... the poor schmucks."

WHO'S DONE IT:
ROB SMITH,
EXECUTIVE EDITOR,
PC ACCELERATOR

HOW DID IT BEGIN--} "Beginning as a gamer on the old *Sinclair Spectrum*, it seemed that writing for games mags was a cushy way of earning a living doing something cool. Two years out of college and still no job, it seemed that the golden arches was a more likely employment destination. But having the same name as a popular band lead singer (think about it) got my resume noticed. Then it was research. Prove that you know what you're talking about, and be pro-active in supplying pre-written reviews in the style and format of your chosen magazine. For starting writers, enthusiasm is a primary requirement."

WHO'S DONE IT:
CHUCK OSBORN,
ASSISTANT EDITOR,
PC ACCELERATOR

HOW DID IT BEGIN--} "Since owning my first console, the Sears TeleSports system in the late '70s, I knew I wanted a place in the burgeoning world of videogames. Twenty years and many games later, during which I dabbled in stand-up comedy, interned in radio promotions, and worked in the mind-numbing world of telecommunications, the chance finally came when I joined the staff of *PC Accelerator* as Assistant Editor. The years I'd spent thumbing my nose at corporate status reports finally paid off when I tricked EIC Mike Salmon into thinking I could write professionally. And I've never looked back ... the poor schmucks ..."

WHO'S DONE IT:
JASON D'APRILE,
FREELANCE WRITER

HOW DID IT BEGIN--} "Pretty simple really, way back when I saw an ad in a small Amiga magazine looking for writers. Being an Amiga guy at the time, I gave them a call and got some work. From there I just used that base as something to show other magazines and worked my way up. It was the rolling stone effect. You pretty much just have to consistently prove that you're a reliable, trustworthy and professional person to work with, and that you know your stuff. It also helps if you don't flirt badly with the PR reps ... This causes bad things to happen. Bad things!"

IMAGINE MEDIA
PC ACCELERATOR OFFICES

Between heated sessions of *Tribes*, *StarCraft*, and *Looney Tunes Comic Capers*, the hardworking staff of **PCXL** somehow manages to turn out a fine piece of gaming journalism each month.

ART/3D MODELLING

WHAT YOU'LL NEED ⇢ Computer Game Artist is one of the most constantly needed positions in game companies, so there'll always be the demand. On the other hand, next to programming, it's the position requiring the most raw technical skill, and only occasionally offers the chance for actual game *design* input. Extensive knowledge of programs such as 3D Studio Max, Softimage, Photoshop and LightWave (as well as image processing packages such as DeBabelizer) will be required, but even non-computer backgrounds in fine art and industrial design will come in handy for character design, storyboarding and similar duties.

WHAT YOU'LL DO ⇢ Jobs in the game art field vary wildly, from Art Director positions (which require you to set the whole visual tone for the game while managing a staff of lower-level artists) to "pixel monkey" duties. This can involve less creative but still vital tasks as cleaning up scanned art and textures, or even setting up automated batch-file processes with art utility programs. "Pixel monkey" is not the most romantic of jobs, but a good way to build up your skills and your resume.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE ⇢ This industry is known for its, uh, casual attire, especially among the creative types. While not especially recommended as interview attire, blue hair, vampire fangs, large pieces of metal throughout the anatomy and "Bite Me Hard" T-Shirts are not uncommon in the bowels of any given company's art department. Computer artists are also infamous for slipping their own visual gags and statements into computer games — disguised photos of themselves, visual puns, references to classic films and books, etc. This job really does have its perks.

WHAT YOU'LL HATE ⇢ Entry-level art positions can be particularly grim, and entire offices full of computer artists are often referred to as "farms" or "mills." Still, everybody has to start somewhere. Once again, people skills will come in handy when it comes to making an impression, and be ready to swallow your pride on occasion.

WHAT YOU'LL MAKE ⇢ Entry level positions for a reasonably established company can yield between 20-40K.

WHO'S DONE IT:
BJ WEST,
MAXIS
(FORMERLY OF ATARI, POSTLINEAR)

"The big difficulty is that because there are so many little startups right and left, they tend to dump their staff into the marketplace fairly regularly, creating a big talent pool. So it can be hard for somebody who's *just* starting out to break into the biz. That is, unless you're going for a company that's just firing up and looking for the "Discount Artist" that might be willing to take a chance. Until you become established, you're pretty much in the trenches, generating assets. Mostly it's art directors or senior artists who are doing the actual design. The higher up the food chain you are, the closer you get to that. When I first started out at Atari, I was given a sketch and a write up, and told "do this." The higher up I got, it was like "we need something kinda like this," and then pretty soon it was "aw, knock yourself out."

"… they finally needed music for a project, and I said 'Look, I'll do it for *free*, okay?'"

Accolade's *Redline* is one of Tallarico's most recent projects

MUSICIAN

WHAT YOU'LL NEED ⇢ Musical talent, a short but demonstrative demo tape, and the means to get it to the right people (see below). Experience with music and sound editing programs such as Sound Forge, Digital Performer, Alchemy, or Sound Edit Pro is highly recommended as well.

WHAT YOU'LL DO ⇢ Working with designers and producers to score computer games is obviously the main job, but musicians also are often called upon to create or oversee voiceovers, dialogue editing and in-game sound effects.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE ⇢ Creating a really compelling (and loud) soundscape for a game that brings the player back for more. Imagine your favorite realtime strategy game with only one or two types of voice responses, cruddy weapon sound effects, and grating music — how long would you play it?

WHAT YOU'LL HATE ⇢ Working with designers and producers who think they know more about music than you do; even experienced industry pros will tell you that this annoyance never completely disappears.

WHAT YOU'LL MAKE ⇢ Starting composers can make anywhere from 30-40K a year, with opportunities reaching as high as 70-80K; once you break off on your own, your dedication and energy form the limit.

Work is most likely to be found freelancing.

WHO'S DONE IT:
TOMMY TALLARICO,
TOMMY TALLARICO STUDIOS

Tommy Tallarico is an established composer with 140+ game music scores and his own independent studio. He started off as a tester, and got his foot in the musical door by being willing to "do anything" to establish himself. And establish himself he has. Tallarico now has his own renowned musical operation, regular contribution to (and appearances on) "Electric Playground," keynote speaker gigs at large game industry conferences, and

TOMMY TALLARICO
TOMMY TALLARICO STUDIOS

With 140+ game scores to his credit, Tommy Tallarico is one of the most sought-after musicians in the game business.

really nifty metallic business cards which can cause grievous bodily harm at 15 meters if flung properly.

HOW TO GET THAT JOB--> "The secret to a demo tape of three or four pieces is to put your best stuff on. A lot of people try different styles to show that they're diversified. If your best stuff is reggae, put the reggae on. There are enough projects out there for specialty music to fit the bill."

"The best thing to do if you want to break in is go to E3 or the Computer Game Developer's Conference. That's where you're gonna meet all the producers, designers, VPs of R&D and Production and all that stuff. Just go up to the booths and hand a tape to 'em. If you don't have the time or money to make that trip, just send the tapes to the music directors. If you want to be really serious and aggressive, get a headhunter or some type of agent. Again, those are the kind of people that you meet at the Game Developer's Conference or E3."

"The only major set back is sometimes when you're doing projects, the producer or whoever likes to tell you what kind of music they want, so they take away that creativeness from the composer. They'll basically have you come in and say, 'We want Prodigy.'"

"I started off as a tester at Virgin. As soon as I got in, every day I would bug the VP of the company, 'Hey, lemme do music, lemme do music!' Equipment-wise, I only had the basics, no studio. When I first moved out to California, I was living on the beach. I had a keyboard or two. After three months, they finally needed music for a project, and I said 'Look, I'll do it for *free*, okay?' Take your first job for whatever you can, and once you prove yourself to be great, the next project they do, they're gonna come back to you. My first project was *Prince of Persia* on the Game Boy. That was a challenge."

GAMEPLAYING/ TESTING

WHAT YOU'LL NEED--> Hand-eye coordination, good reflexes, the ability to focus on a single task, and *woaaaoy* too much time on your hands.

WHAT YOU'LL DO--> Just what it sounds like: Get paid for playing games. If you're playing games for cash and prizes, you'll at least, in theory, like the games you're playing. As a tester, depending on what company you're working for, there's just no way to know what's gonna come down the pipe – it could be *Half-Life*, it could be *Borbie Pet Detective*. Also, testers should ideally be able to convey their thoughts directly and succinctly, because half of testing is writing up

bug reports on the hows, whens and whys game-build crashes occur.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE--> There's definitely a certain dweeby prestige to earning cash and computers (and in come cases, cars) for excelling at the computer game of your choice in competitions such as the Professional Gamer's League. Testers, while not exactly in the spotlight, get to work vampire hours, clamp on the headphones, and hone their game skills for a steady paycheck.

WHAT YOU'LL HATE--> See *Borbie Pet Detective*, earlier.

WHAT YOU'LL MAKE--> Everybody from the most independent house to biggies like LucasArts and Sierra need testers, and, alas, they pay pretty much the same. Expect anywhere from the equivalent of $9 to $15/hr, at least until you've proven yourself. But, Tester is the first step toward Producer or Game Designer.

WHO'S DONE IT--> If you choose the career games player path – and if you're good enough – your "income" is a wild card. In addition to prizes and cash, high-scoring members of the PGL have landed themselves

endorsement deals with hardware and software manufacturers. By way of example, the following is a list of the prizes won by Jay Severson, winner of last season's PGL *StarCraft* tournament:

• $8,500 in cash
• CyberMax 350mhz Game PC (AMD K-6-2 powered)
• Viper V550 graphics card from Diamond Multimedia
• 28MB of Synchronous Memory from MGV Memory
• US Robotics 56K modem
• Logitech mouse
• Advent Powered Partners AV390PL sound system

(This is the stuff he actually received; total value of the prizes is estimated at $4,000)

OTHER POTENTIAL INCOME SOURCES JAY IS PURSUING-->

•Endorsements: $10K – $50K per year
•Public appearances (software unveilings, mall openings, trade show booths): $500 – $1,000 per day (plus travel expenses)
• Book deals (strategy guides): $7,500 – $20,000 per title (and these hot game books can sell)
• Magazine or online columns: $100 – $1,000 per month (but PCXL gets to talk to him for free!)

There's a certain dweeby prestige to earning cash and computers for excelling at the computer game of your choice ...

JAY SEVERSON
PGL *STARCRAFT* SEASON 3 CHAMPION

Publisher's Clearing House has nothing on this dude. Jay Severson shows off the spoils of his victory, watched by PGL commissioner, Nolan Bushnell (of *Pong* fame).

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"The Ultimate Gaming Machine"

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Speaker & Subwoofer System
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ATX Full-Tower Case w/300 Watt PS
(KoolMaxx) Video Cooling System
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US Robotics V.90 56K Voice/Fax/Modem
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ATX Full-Tower Case w/300 Watt PS
(KoolMaxx) Video Cooling System
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Microsoft Intellimouse PS/2
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ATI Rage Fury

ATI engages in furious performance competition with the Riva TNT

PRICE→	$160 SRP
CHIPSET→	ATI Rage 128 GL
RAM→	32MB
API SUPPORT→	D3D, OpenGL
BUNDLE→	Half-Life: Day One, Motoracer 2

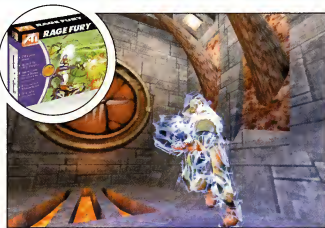**A**TI has always enjoyed a steady and heavily profitable niche in the graphics card scene. Its versatile products have all but taken over the OEM markets, and its utilization of inexpensive, high quality TV-out and video editing capabilities has seen few rivals.

Unlike 3Dfx, PowerVR, and NVIDIA, ATI has never enjoyed the gamers' mind share of a breakout gaming chipset, mainly due to lackluster 3D performance. The Rage II was an awesome 2D chip with fair 3D acceleration; the AGP Rage Pro is a killer D3D accelerator, but its OpenGL performance doesn't reach Voodoo2's lofty heights. The Rage 128 GL, ATI's latest Swiss-Army chip, comes damn close, though.

The ATI Rage Fury is the first card based on the new chip, and it's nearly as fast as Riva TNT-based products, but it does so much more. Between its competitive 3D speed, awesome desktop acceleration, and numerous other capabilities (which can be augmented with an optional ATI-TV Wonder daughtercard), the Rage Fury could conceivably become the base card of choice over TNT-based accelerators. But you'll still want one or two Voodoo 2 cards to supplement it.

The Rage Fury is only available as an AGP part, but packed with a startling 32MB of local RAM, so it's not likely to need system memory for texture storage. That hardy supply of RAM is used dynamically for frame buffer or texture caching, which allows it to crank out high

Carmack reckons *QIII* runs great on a Fury, but he likes Macs too.

resolution screens in 32-bit true color. Loosely translated: Games look more colorful and play at a higher resolution than on a TNT.

The Rage Fury did an amazing job with both Direct3D and OpenGL accelerated games, churning out

THE NEED. THE NEED FOR SPEED!

THE TEST MACHINE: A PII 300 running on a 100MHz 440BX with 64MB SDRAM, running Win98 and DirectX 6.0. All scores represent frames per second at 800 x 600 resolution.

The Rage Fury is easily the best card to come down the pipe since Riva TNT-based solutions. The differences in benchmark scores are so insignificant that a forthcoming driver revision may well put Rage 128 GL-based products ahead of Riva TNT boards.

About The Benchmarks

You'll notice (hopefully) that our benchmarks have changed a little bit. In the interest of keeping up with the times, we've dropped the *Turok* benchmark altogether, because unlike most new 3D accelerators, it doesn't do resolutions above 800 x 600.

In its place, we've added a *Half-Life* benchmark. The outstanding popularity of the new game, along with its torturous effect on 3D cards, makes it perfect for benchmarking. We created our own demo that we'll use to fetch benchmarks for *Half-Life*. It's creatively entitled PCXL_DEMO, and it's a good indicator of average *Half-Life* performance. Try out your own benchmarks by downloading the demo from www.pcxl.com.

The demo was recorded on the map JED, which requires the player to move through both enclosed low polygon hallways to a big, texture-heavy hangar, as well as battle numerous aliens and soldiers. This locale was chosen because it represents an average cross-section of the game, and the framerate it returns is a good overall indicator of how the game should perform with the use of a particular hardware device. It's not a huge, high-poly, high-texture backbreaker — such demos are readily available on the Internet, and we're not interested in them. They might find the very limits of a card, but we're more concerned with realistic, real-world performance. After all that is what really matters.
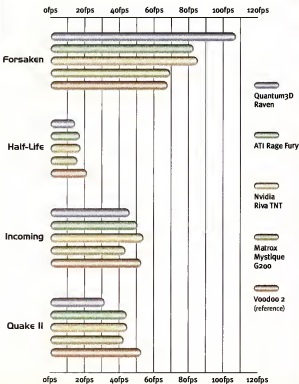
numbers up there with TNT chips. In fact, the differences were so small that a driver update or two may even the score entirely. Furthermore, the Rage Fury rarely slowed down. Even in the most texture- and polygon-heavy segments of our benchmarks, Rage Fury's frame rate held its own. Could this indicate that a faster processor would garner faster frame rates, much like the Voodoo2? Only time will tell.

Our hardware reviewer never puts the cover on his PC; otherwise, he would have never noticed the tremendous heat generated by the tiny .25 micron processor. Concerns had already been raised, however. Following shipment, an e-mail from the company responded, saying that the extreme heat is "not only expected, but also completely within the operating parameters of the chip. The current running temperatures of the RAGE 128 GL do not introduce any potential for premature failure of the part, or any surrounding components."

The Rage Fury will quickly become one of the most prominent 2D/3D cards to be had. John Carmack gave it credibility by quoting it as a top performer in the earliest *Quake III: Arena* benchmarks. As it stands, it's a viable base card that can earn itself a spot next to your Voodoo2(s). If it supported Glide, we might have even recommended it on its own. ➧

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http://pc-xtreme.com

What really happens inside a 3D accelerator

Even though many people have 3D accelerators, few understand the complicated and tedious processes that take place inside. Thanks to modern science, we have delved deep into the very hardware that makes these things work, and in doing so have discovered exactly what these amazing pieces of hardware do. The concepts may be beyond what you ever believed possible, but trust us, we're professionals and we wouldn't steer you wrong ... much.

The long journey of a pixel into texelhood

1

The 2D bit of information known as a pixel is sent from the computer game on a long journey toward 3D acceleration and ultimately, redemption.

2

The pixel begins its journey completely naked and unshaven, and is fitted for textures in the Texture Fitting Unit.

3

A texture is then applied on the pixel by texture gnomes in the TMU (Texture Memory Unit). For accelerators with two TMUs, such as the Voodoo 2, the pixel is given a second coat of textures to ward off the harmful effects of weather. Voodoo 2 cards enable you to hook two boards together in an SLI configuration, which gives each pixel four coats of texture making them virtually impervious to rust and mildew.

4

The textured pixel then is sent into the card's RAM for its journey into manhood. Cards with more RAM are always considered best because the pixels that flow through them are more mature, and more likely to make sound, rational decisions when they reach the monitor.

5

At this point the pixels are still flat, so they are sent to the Pixel Inflation Unit. This bit of circuitry inflates each pixel with pure nitrogen, giving depth to what were previously two-dimensional bits.

6

Because the pixels have been inflated, they are often a bit slow and listless. To push them to the next section of the card, board makers use pixel wranglers to drive the pixels. Some of the new cards have begun using 128-bit busses, which is basically public transportation for pixels.

7

As the pixels enter the special effects section of the card, they are generally feeling a little cross and jaggy. So the first special effects unit sands each pixel with a scaled down version of the Sears Craftsman N232 combination sander/grinder.

8

All pixels are then sent to the Texture Buffers to be polished.

9

In the next special effects unit, the most over-polished pixels are separated to act as lens flare and the occasional throwaway colored lighting effect.

10

Further down the line, each pixel is fitted with name brand tennis shoes (depending upon the licensing agreements). These agreements are more important than ever, considering the NBA's labor problem. If you look closely at the texels (the finished pixels) produced by 3Dfx boards, you will see small Nike logos on every one. Adidas has a similar deal with Riva and the TNT.

11

By this time, most (if not all) of the pixels are aliased and must undergo an intense, demoralizing reeducation process. By the time it is finished, 97 percent of the texels have been converted, and are fully Anti-aliased. The rest are burned for fuel.

12

After a short graduation ceremony and a prom, the finished texels are housed in the texel stables to await the green light, which signals them to run like hell for your monitor.

13

The texel hits your computer screen and lights itself on fire for a brief 1/60th of a second (or for the lucky ones, 1/10th of a second, in games like *Trespasser*). This short flame is the display you see when you play your favorite game.

So the next time you play a game like *Tomb Raider*, know how many pixels gave their lives so Lara's breasts will not be flat 2D sprites. It's a sacrifice that certainly wasn't in vain. ➤

Most of this story was fiction, however if you pay close attention you may actually learn more about the process involved in creating the amazing squirts of blood you love so much. If not, then at least you can say nobody else in their right mind (not that we are) would have dared run this story.

CREATIVE
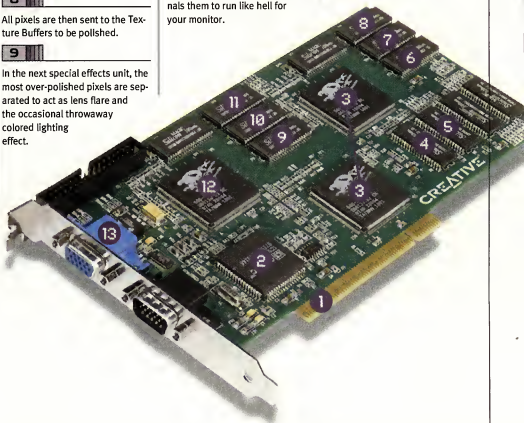
Kick-Ass 3D Performance =
Kick-Ass Reviews

3D audio API's A3D, EAX, and Sensaura duke it out on competing sound cards

3D Audio Wars

A few million years ago, after the Earth cooled, PC sound cards were invented. Until then, the only noises we old-timers heard as we played our ASCII-based games were tinny beeps and boops. The audio quality was about equal to a high-end telephone after being dropped off a cliff into a deep ravine, washed away in a flood and, years later, recovered from one of the many sewage treatment plants in Gary, Indiana. Since then, PC audio has come a long way. In fact, our offices are located about 2,300 miles from Gary (a good thing, considering the horrendous stench that permeates from that stinkin' town).

PC audio has also seen vast technological advancements. Eight-bit audio boards gave way to 16-bit digital sound cards, their quality improving with every generation. Whether you had a SoundBlaster card or a SoundBlaster-compatible card, you simply knew you were living on the cutting edge of computer sound — especially if your MIDI chip could make the Doom theme sound like it was being played on actual guitars. Remember? It goes like this: da-NA-na, da-NA-na, da-NA-na-NA-na-NA-na ...

That was *nothing*. Today, simply finding an ISA-based sound card is almost impossible, unless you look in a Packard Bell computer. 3D audio has finally made it to the mainstream. By next year, a 3D sound card will be standard equipment in any self-respecting PC, just like 3D graphics cards are now.

The 3D audio market, like 3D graphics cards, is in the midst of an API battle. API stands for Application Program Interface, and the purpose of an API is to act as a translator between a program and your hardware. Currently, the predominant and most widely-supported 3D API is A3D. Designed by Aureal Technologies, A3D works best with the company's Vortex chips. Running a close second is EAX, or Environmental Audio eXtensions, developed by Creative Labs and currently supported by the SoundBlaster Live! Microsoft has its own 3D audio API: DirectSound3D, which is supported by nearly every 3D sound card on the market, but few current games use it.

Far behind these prominent 3D sound standards, there's the Yamaha's WaveForce 192XG, which uses Sensaura, a little known, little supported 3D scheme. Sensaura itself isn't supported directly, but the WaveForce 192XG recognizes A3D streams and, through a software layer, translates them to Sensaura's API, with limited success.

All of the sound cards we've been talking about flawlessly support DirectSound and DirectSound3D. They also include joystick/MIDI ports that work perfectly with every joystick we tested, including the once-troublesome Microsoft SideWinder Force Feedback Pro. The Yamaha 192XG packs the best quality MIDI of the three boards, each of which do 64 voices in hardware and a minimum of 128 in software — but considering that modern games don't do MIDI, that's not really a major factor.

Pure DOS support is also not a vital component, though the MX300 and the SoundBlaster Live! offer it, which is handy for those returns to the wonders of *Doom*. Current PCs can play nearly any older game in a DOS box, which all three cards support, making this mostly a non-issue.

Unreal was the first game to fully utilize 3D positional sound.

Half-Life: A great example of effective 3D audio.

THE KILLER API

Each of the three sound cards reviewed in this article were designed with a particular 3D sound API in mind, and it wasn't DirectSound3D. The Monster Sound MX300 is the perfect A3D 2.0 platform, the SoundBlaster Live! Value was released simultaneously with EAX, and the WaveForce waves the Sensaura flag.

EAX is actually a bit out of its league, though, because, unlike the other two, it's not really a positional sound solution. Positional sound APIs attempt to track the actual, in-game source for each audio signal produced and replicate it, so that it sounds like it's coming from the direction of the source relative to your in-game avatar. Thus, if one sound-producing object is behind and to the left of your in-game position, and an identical one is in front and to the left of your position, the sounds they produce will each have a distinct inflection. EAX doesn't do much positioning, though; it produces environmental reverb effects to increase the perceived depth of game sounds. Most of the time, in-game sounds come from the right direction, but there's more of a stereo-like ambiguity to EAX audio when compared to A3D, especially A3D 2.0.

The hands-down best of the three is A3D 2.0, which does things with two speakers that most folks won't believe are possible until they hear it. A3D 1.0, in its own right, was an amazing breakthrough in PC audio; the latest incarnation of the API shows the skill and polish that went into creating it. The difference between standard stereo sound and A3D 2.0 powered audio is astonishing; it's like getting a whole new sound system.

Clunky A3D translation, and lack of support for DirectSound3D place Sensaura on the bottom of this heap. As implemented in the WaveForce, it doesn't cut it as a gamers' sound technology — especially when competing with A3D 2.0.

Creative
SoundBlaster Live! Value

PRICE→	$99 SRP
INTERFACE→	PCI
CHIPSET→	EMU10K1
BUNDLE→	Unreal Special Edition (with EAX support), various audio applications

Once the only name in PC sound, Creative's delayed jump into the PCI slot has caused its grasp on the market to slip. The Sound-Blaster Live! line embodies the company's hope to regain its high standing, but while this hot new sound board was under construction, A3D took hold.

The SBLive! does an outstanding job, and its feature list is as impressive as the MX300's. The long line of backward compatibility is continued faithfully, so this may be your card of choice if you just can't let go of ancient, DOS-only titles.

The SoundBlaster Live! also supports four speakers, and its software interface lets you play around with the signal, making it sound like you're in a concert hall, a stadium or many other locales.

Game support for EAX easily rivals that for A3D, so 3D audio support isn't an issue. The SBLive! also supports DirectSound flawlessly, so compatibility isn't a problem, either. The biggest letdown is the fact that EAX just can't compare with A3D 2.0 (or even A3D, for that matter). With four speakers, EAX enhanced games sound breathtaking — it's almost equal to the incredible sound produced by four speakers plugged into a Monster Sound MX300. But like most of us, if you only have two speakers, the audio leverage goes to the MX300 without question.

RATING 9

+ **Pluses**
→ Awesome value; four-speaker sound is amazing

− **Minuses**
→ A3D 2.0 is simply better

Yamaha
WaveForce 192XG

PRICE→	$99 SRP
INTERFACE→	PCI
CHIPSET→	YMF742E-V
BUNDLE→	Final Fantasy VII Demo, various MIDI and audio applications

Jedi Knight: John Williams...

If you're a MIDI freak or an amateur musician, this may be the card for you, but this magazine is aimed squarely at gamers (and horny guys, but that's another matter) and from that standpoint it just doesn't stack up to the other cards in comparison.

Like the other two cards here, the WaveForce is DirectSound and DirectSound3D compatible, and it supports DOS games run in a DOS box. While game compatibility isn't a problem, 3D API compatibility is. The WaveForce coughs up A3D 1.0 the best it can, but it's spotty at best. While testing it with *Jedi Knight*, positional sources in motion often seemed to jump about, rather than move smoothly.

The problems aren't confined to 3D sound, either. Regular digital audio sounded midrange heavy compared to the other two cards. We got used to it, but when we switched back to one of the other cards, the improvement in sound quality was, quite frankly, overpowering.

Yamaha's always had a reputation for making fine wavetable daughtercards, especially for use by music buffs. It may be best for the company to pursue that venue rather than to continue trying to crack the game market. Against the competition, the WaveForce is out of its league.

RATING 5

+ **Pluses**
→ Good, high-quality wavetable support

− **Minuses**
→ Games don't use MIDI anymore. Poor 3D sound support

Diamond
Monster Sound MX300

PRICE→	$99 SRP
INTERFACE→	PCI
CHIPSET→	Aureal Vortex 2
BUNDLE→	Half-Life: Day One, various MP3 tools

The logical progression of the Monster Sound continues. While the original Monster Sound was pricey and dogged with incompatibilities, that's all been addressed. Selling for under $100, the MX300 is, simply put, the ultimate gamer's sound card.

Based on Aureal's new Vortex 2 chip, the MX300 is the only one of these three cards to support A3D 2.0 (at press time it was the only Vortex 2 card on the market). That gives it a clear advantage over the nearly identical SoundBlaster Live! Value, whose feature list is almost identical to the MX300's. A3D 2.0 really seems to be the breakout API, and enormous support makes a huge difference.

Like the first Monster Sound and the recent MX200, the MX300 offers two output jacks, so you can connect up to four speakers. The MX300 has new tricks, though: If you slap a daughterboard on it, it also does Dolby Digital through an S/PDIF jack and supports six channel (five satellites and a subwoofer, or 5.1) speaker systems.

The MX300 supports every audio API in current use, including DirectSound, DirectSound3D, EAX, and, of course, A3D 1 and 2. With its current drivers, it'll do 32 simultaneous positional streams, which is more than you're likely to hear in any game.

Sound quality is superb no matter which API is in control. It's unlikely that any future Vortex 2 card will match these features at this price. As it stands, the Monster Sound MX300 is *the* sound card for a gaming PC.

RATING 10

+ **Pluses**
→ Incredible price; supports all sound APIs in current use

− **Minuses**
→ Doesn't slice tomatoes well after you cut a tin can with it

Aliens vs Predator:

▌▌ SCARING THE CRAP OUT OF THE BIG BOYS

At last year's E3 show in Atlanta, *Aliens versus Predator* was as so-so as a game could possibly be. It was already oft-delayed (some three years in the making), sported an engine that didn't appear to be any advance on *Quake II*, level design that our own Cone of Tragedy-creator Dan Egger could have produced, and lights that you could extinguish, pitching an entire area into blackness. (Okay, the last bit was kinda cool.) But six months later, and hell, has developer Rebellion been burning the midnight oil on this one ...

Perhaps I was being a little unfair with the E3 assessment, but the competition, in the form of *Half-Life*, *Sin*, *Quake II* mission packs, and even (those tricksters) *Trespasser* all seemed more likely bets for success. But after extensively delving into the depths of the space stations, ships and other locales that any movie buff will instantly recognize, it's quite evident that *Aliens* versus *Predator* has the style, atmosphere, and balance to make it one of the biggest hits of the year. We here at PCXL are loathe to write such chronic preview cliché, but it's difficult to not get a little enthusiastic, given the balance of the three races – the colonial marine, Alien and Predator – pitted against each other in pulsating, claustrophobic levels.

The early build of the game – described as "very alpha" by producer David Stalker – still contained a marvelous appreciation of what made the *Aliens* and *Predator* movies so fantastic. In multiplay, fighting as a solo Predator against three hapless marines (who just happened to be fellow PCXL staffers) was one of the most entertaining deathmatch experiences I've had in a long while. That includes *Half-Life*, and even *Rainbow Six*. If for its multiplayer diversity alone, *Aliens versus Predator* is going to be a must-buy.

Based in Oxford, England, the three-person Rebellion team kicked off its career creating *Aliens versus Predator* for the Atari Jaguar. (That game was probably the only reason to own the doomed system.) Now, under Fox's beady eye and with thirty people on board, they've built a proprietary 3D engine for the PC, based on the characters from those scary-as-hell movies. To make these three races convincing, the engine needed to be flexible enough to convince players that the Aliens were using their pheromone detection system, that the Predators had stealth and innate hunting abilities, and that the marines could see, hear and use motion trackers just like in the film. So the AI had to be quite spectacular—and so far, so impressive.

Three species means three blood colors are needed. In addition, bullets, fire and acid all leave marks on the environment. What's really impressive is the way that all these elements are lit individually. Under the Predator's vision modes, alien acid is visible only when viewed normally or through the special alien filter, whereby aliens appear white on a red backdrop. When viewed through the human filter, marines stand out as yellow and red glowing targets on a blue background. Even gaping bullet wounds are visible if you look closely.

Utilizing the power of your 3D accelerators, environmental effects like smoke, flames (the most realistic looking in any game thus far) and muzzle flashes are all powered by a detailed particle system. Pools of water appear to be only eye candy, until an attacking alien is given away, and the pool ripples

Never, ever, ever get this close to an Alien.

The first *Alien* game was a *Pac-Man* clone for the Atari VCS

realistically around the beast, moving in swiftly for the kill. The hit location system (or "hi-poly hierarchical characters" if you ask Associate Producer, Chris Miller) allows severed Alien arms to drip acid blood. In addition, Marine legs and heads regularly distance themselves from their bodies after an Alien attack, and Marine expressions change as they unleash their weapon loads. (I'm sure there was a load of another kind unleashed from one guy when I, as the Alien, dropped from the ceiling right in front of him. Oh well, it was probably just Ed.)

Perhaps most impressive of the lot is the realtime lighting. For probably the first time in any first-person game, if you shoot out a light, lo! the light goes out. Many developers have tried to fake this effect, but in *A v P* (as it henceforth shall be known), it really works. Especially in multiplayer games, this effect is incredible and changes the whole feel and balance of a level in one fell swoop. All of a sudden, other senses (and motion sensors) become more important than your trigger finger. It's a fascinating twist.

When video walls stream real video into the game, and you see your character's reflection in the screens, you sense that you're experiencing technology that really does have the potential to push the genre forward. With careful balancing of the levels (at press time object placement, enemy number and lighting still had to be tweaked), *A v P* genuinely has the potential to be a more immersive, pants-spoiling experience than the movies. Now that should be something.

MARINE VS. ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

MULTIPLAYER → *Aliens versus Predator* could well be the shit. Its chance for success is rooted in the balance of the three different races (detailed below). How it pans out in the shipping version will depend on testing in these latter stages of development – currently straight deathmatch and team deathmatch are supported. Options under consideration include one Alien versus a bunch of Marines, but only the Alien can score. Shoot the Alien, and you become the Alien and so can score. As we proved during testing in the office, the teamwork involved in playing as a squad of Marines versus one Predator was fantastic (destroying or protecting power-ups was the crucial tactic).

It's unlikely that you'll be asked to suspend disbelief enough to have Marine, Alien and Predator all equally powerful. (The movies just don't allow this kind of thinking.) According to David Stalker, "Whoever is the master of the character will be better at the game, regardless of which species they play. If the Alien player walks around upright on the floor the whole time they'll get creamed! If, on the other hand, they scurry around the walls, hide in corners and dark areas and spring out on their fellow players and eat them ... then they'll probably do rather well. In the case of the Predator, if you simply remain invisible all the time and all of your weapons are super-smart tracking, then you'll be a boring character to play against and (after a while) to play. Hence we can tweak things like the power drain of weapons, availability of power ups, etc. How you use your character's species-specific abilities and weapons will provide for a fair fight."

One arm or two, Aliens are still deadly this close to Marines. The smart gun can auto-target, which certainly helps.

MARINE

HOW TO PLAY → The motion tracker is your best friend in the world. But remember that it tracks all movement, including your own teammates'. As per the movies, it's scarily easy to get itchy on the trigger finger and blow away your pals. Remember the hit location issues: Aim for the Alien's elongated heads, and get the hell away. When they die, their acid-blood spew is as deadly as their claws.

Grenades are powerful, but you need to aim them carefully. The flame thrower is the most effective; set the creature on fire, then retreat (while its vision is obscured) and pepper it with pulse rifle or smart gun ammo. Remember that

flares not only help you to see, but can also blind Aliens and Predators, that are using their special vision modes.

Fire fast, fire long and fire hard.

A Predator firing a shoulder cannon from this distance should be avoided.

You get help in the single player game, and in multiplayer. Coordinating attacks to trap Aliens or a Predator is vital. Static gun emplacements will also help.

Weapon	Primary fire	Secondary
PULSE RIFLE	One press = 4-shot burst, hold down for continuous fire	Grenade fire
SMART GUN	Extremely rapid fire	Auto-Target on/off
FLAME THROWER	Flame to torch alien scum	none
SADAR	Big ass rocket launcher	none
GRENADE LAUNCHER	Lobs wide burst...uh...grenades	Change grenade type
MINIGUN	Fast firing, heavy machine gun	None
FLARES	Throw flare	N/A

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ALIEN

HOW TO PLAY ⇢ It's all about speed and the ability to walk on any surface. Using the "crouch" button, the Alien can grip to any surface. Aside from moving like lightning, the ability to race on the ceilings and then drop on unsuspecting foe is a killer trick (the Alien, like a cat, automatically adjusts itself to its feet as it lands from heights). Even if you're running on the ground, make sure that you're crouched. Although disorienting at first, racing around the ceiling and walls is extremely effective. Marines may sense you, but they'll likely be looking at their own eye level. Get behind them, drop, take a moment to laugh maniacally, then slash like mad.

The Alien's weakness is that it only has melee weapons. The tail strike is very powerful, but fairly slow. Try stealthily getting behind a prey and waiting for the jaws to appear on screen – then strike. Picture the ooze-dripping jaw striking through your hapless victim's heart. Now revel in the health boost that you receive as a result of that perfect strike.

Weapon	Primary fire	Secondary
ALIEN	Deadly claws	An auto aiming tail (now that's technology)
	Jaw attack (automatic when you're lined up juuuust right)	Opening beer cans

The Predator's cloaking device doesn't cover it completely when it moves. Using speed and the ceiling is your best bet.

Get the perfect strike and an enemy head comes off, and, you'll see the energy being ingested (plus 50 health points).

When it's dark, the Alien's special vision mode creates odd coloring on potential victims. They also have a wider field of view.

PREDATOR

HOW TO PLAY ⇢ With an evil grin plastered on your face. The Predator is a fantastic weapon – learn to cycle quickly through the two vision modes when playing against Marines and Aliens (and against just one type, it's even easier). The Shoulder Cannon is the most powerful weapon. It's easy to use as the targeting triangle zooms in, though it does use a lot of energy. A zoom function also lets the Predator spot creatures in the distance when not using the special vision modes (handy for conserving energy).

The Predator is also fast, and has plenty of other weaponry available. The spear gun is deadly, as are the discs. Even the Predator's major threat – being immolated by a Marine wielding a flame thrower – can be combated with a quick jab from the MediComp. Predators are fairly slow at changing between weapons, though, so carefully manage the energy supply so that you know when to swap.

In Human viewing mode (blue) the Marine stands out clearly, but (below) is invisible if your Predator is looking for Aliens (red).

In this viewing mode, you can do a quick dental check on pursuing Aliens.

Weapon	Primary fire	Secondary
WRIST BLADES	Slashes	Power slash
HAND GUN	Fires small energy bolts	Fires in a spread
SPEAR GUN	Deadly spear chucker	None
PLASMA CASTER	The auto-targeting cannon (hold to power up, then release)	Power up (without firing)
DISC WEAPON	Throws an explosive disc	Mode select (homing, exploding, summon)
MEDICOMP	Heal (also extinguishes flame)	Extinguish (without heal, saves charge)

PC ACCELERATOR March 1999 Check out the Anchorpoint Essays (www.geocities.com/~theduս/) for detailed Alien biology!

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▐▌▐▌ GOING IT ALONE

Despite the bountiful excitement waiting in the multiplayer arena, the single-player game has a unique perspective, too. Essentially, each species plays the same six basic levels in a story-line that is constantly evolving, depending on the goals of the different races. But it really doesn't play like the same six levels repeated three times. The Aliens use the air vents, the Marines have the more conventional approach, and the Predators mix the two. This has meant that level design has been a long process. The requirements for one race to navigate a level have to be different from another in order to maintain the concept of approaching a challenge from a different perspective. To ensure that the levels are navigable by all races, when necessary, the Marine is given a limited-use jetpack and the Predator, a grappling hook. In addition, those insidious little Face Huggers appear as a threat to Marines and Predators alike, and there are numerous environmental puzzles, traps and tricks to avoid.

It seems like a bit of a cheat, but it really isn't. Stalker says, "It involves a lot of strategic and logic changes, as well as some more minor cosmetic ones, i.e. whole new lighting conditions. It's pretty impressive to play one level (such as Fury 161) as the familiar Marine, and then approach it through the air ducts in the role of the Alien."

Once you've completed these 18 levels in the three guises, another five bonus levels become available (although how they open up has yet to be finalized). "We are also planning to allow you to play a single-player versus AI game in the [five] multiplayer levels. It's not an *Unreal* botmatch model, but it allows you to check out the multiplayer levels without the need for human opponents," Stalker added.

Unlike many major Hollywood studio licenses, Fox is not restricting or limiting any parameters of the game design to fit with pre-conceived notions of what these extraterrestrial creatures can achieve. "We're all fans and want

to do the best we can with these characters," said Stalker. "The thing we have to watch out for is the fans. People are both obsessive and possessive about this stuff, and if something strikes them as wrong, they sure let you know about it in a hurry! Already there's Internet buzz about what we've got right and wrong. A lot of this is interpretive on our (and everyone else's) parts, but sometimes decisions are made for a reason such as 'it makes the game better,'" he continued.

Most certainly, however, the atmosphere of the movies has been captured artfully, with smoke-filled space stations, pulsating (read: epilepsy/headache-inducing) lights and claustrophobic environments, making it feel like you're alone. Very, very alone. That is, unless you're the bad-ass Predator who can take on the world and is scared of nothing.

Rebellion's end-of-level bosses also manage to capture the scale and dread of the creatures in the movies. Looking at them for the first time is enough to cause that deadly momentary freeze ("the ohnosecond") that will likely be your last. Fortunately, the compelling multi-player game (Fox is still in negotiations with various online services) will keep you going

once the single-player game is completed from all three angles.

That said, Stalker confirmed that there are plans for an expansion pack already in the works. You might be tempted to think that a little arrogant, given a game with a no-brand engine, three years in the making and having ruffled absolutely no feathers in its public appearances at trade shows like E3. But that's all about to come to an end. *Aliens versus Predator* arrives in April, and alongside *Quake II*, *Tribes* and *Rainbow Six*, could be the next action game to define playing styles and attitudes for the coming year.

That smart gun comes in handy when Face Huggers are scurrying around the abandoned remnants of a space station.

"Think you're all that, Marine?" enquires a friendly Alien ...
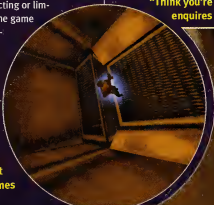
It's probably better to never know what hit you (right) than it is to witness that jaw closing moment, right before your life becomes void (below).

Marines put up a fight, but this Alien's tail sweep will soon bring that to a sticky end.

P.S.T. SCORES			
10			
8			
6			
4			
2			
	Unreal	Jazz Jackrabbit	7th Legion

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Here, Nali, Nali, Nali... I won't hurt you. Promise

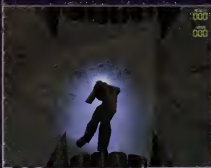S ometimes I feel like William Shatner fighting off the urge to eat one more donut. "Must ... resist ... temp... tation ...," he might say to himself while forcing his hand from an apple fritter. I can sympathize, since my affinity for the new first-person shooters is similar. And when the first-person shooter in question is *Unreal Tournament*, resistance is futile.

Unreal offered a deep single-player experience and showed us what 3D cards and fast PCs were made for, but its multiplayer performance left most gamers feeling deprived. Well, "pissed" is probably a better word. While it looked better than *Quake II*, the online game was so full of glitches and lag issues that it was almost impossible to play on the Internet, and far from smooth on a LAN. Successive

patches ultimately fixed most of the existing problems, but the damage was already done. *Quake II* was the one you played if you wanted to frag some buddies; *Unreal* was the one to play if you liked looking at glistening waterfalls.

Now, *Unreal Tournament* is almost here and multiplayer is the name of the game. In fact, it's the only game. If you thought the "tournament" in the title meant a nice, relaxing game of golf with the local Nali pro, then you may not be prepared for what Epic MegaGames has in store.

Unreal Tournament is all about deathmatch — plain and simple. The biggest difference is the focus on teamplay, a trend that is currently going wild on the Internet with *Rainbow Six* and *Tribes* leading the way.   ▶ p. 66

That's right ... now open wide.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER ⇒	Epic MegaGames
PUBLISHER ⇒	GT Interactive
RELEASE DATE ⇒	April
3D SUPPORT ⇒	Glide

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED   EXCITED   AROUSED

THE HYPE

Bigger, better, and *Unreal*-er, Epic MegaGames has something to prove in multiplayer gaming.

THE HURDLE

Quake III Arena. *Unreal* had a good single-player game, but taking on *Quake* in "online-only" is going to be tough.

THE HIT

Must offer substantially more than the original to make gamers want to buy it. But you will anyway, admit it.

FIVE QUESTIONS

AFTER A FIERCE CHASE ON THE NALI HOMEWORLD, WE FINALLY CONVINCED *UNREAL TOURNAMENT* LEAD DESIGNER CLIFF BLESZINSKI TO ANSWER OUR FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: Was *Unreal Tournament* in development before it was announced that *Quake III* would emphasize multiplayer?
A: *Unreal Tournament* was being developed as its own product before we had any idea of what Id was doing next. I have nothing but the utmost respect for Carmack and his guys, but I do not want to be them, or follow them. We march to the beat of our own drummer, make our own decisions based on what we feel is right for the timeframe and the market.

Q: Who would win in a deathmatch: Lara Croft or a Skaarj warrior?
A: Well, the Skaarj warrior would use his blades to pop Lara's balloon-like breasts, causing her to deflate and fly around the room in an erratic fashion, much to the amusement of onlookers.

Q: PCXL cherishes the rich Nali cultural heritage. Any new ways to mutilate them in Unreal Tournament?
A: We at Epic Games respect and appreciate the rich culture of the Nali Alien and we are astonished that you would suggest such horrific acts of violence against such a peaceful, sensitive race. (We're not sure if the Nali will make an appearance in UT. They're kind of a bunch of pansy-asses, aren't they?)

Q: What would you do if a strange alien appeared from the shadows and gestured for you to follow?
A: My mother told me to never talk to strangers so I would politely decline and cap him in the knees.

Q: The developer's name is Epic MegaGames and the name of the game is *Unreal*. Ego complex?
A: We've yanked the Mega from our name, actually! Now we're just Epic Games now. This does not mean there will be a reduction in the quality in our products, however.

Unreal Tournament Gallery

We don't mean to sound cynical, but don't these screenshots look to be a little bit *too* good? While Epic promises that the depth and power of their *Unreal* engine has barely been tested thus far, it was pretty darn impressive in the first place. Taking on *Quake III* and *Team Fortress 2* head-on is going to be a battle royale.
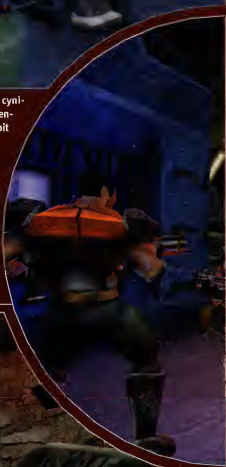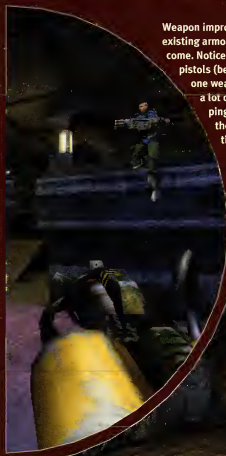
Weapon improvements to the existing armory will be welcome. Notice the double-fisted pistols (below) — that's one weapon that needed a lot of work (or scrapping entirely) from the original. Only time will tell whether Epic has been forgiven for its shoddy initial multiplayer outing.
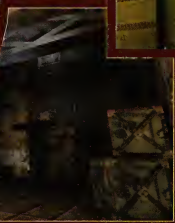
PCXL mascot Hector is unmistakably unreal ... but can still kick Dan's ass

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Surprisingly, the *Unreal Tournament* of Roses Parade has yet to be scheduled

▶ p. 64   So, what is the justification for buying a new game when your patched version of *Unreal* works just fine? "With *Unreal* we barely began to scratch the surface of what this technology is capable of," commented Epic Lead Designer Cliff Bleszinski. "You'll see things in *Unreal Tournament* that you didn't think the engine could do ... weapon effects, incredibly detailed levels, and a faster actor rendering system which speeds up deathmatch play."

Is this an apology for the botched promises of free patches and

Lord British? We've been sent by some *Ultima Online* customers.

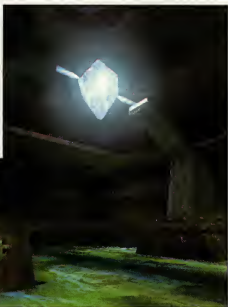upgrades to the 'out-of-box' experience for Internet play? Sounds like Epic is paying twice for what it promised long, long ago.

What Epic is promising is all new deathmatch levels, weapons, an enhanced version of Botmatch, and several of the new modes emphasize teams (understandably inspired by the growing number of *Quake* clans), which means UT will include the requisite Capture the Flag. Other modes include the Assault Match, which divides players into two teams: Defenders and Attackers, whereby the Attackers must infiltrate the enemy base and destroy one or more objects to accumulate points, while the Defenders ... umm ... defend. Domination Match has two teams competing to secure "Control Points" that are dispersed throughout a level. Tournament Match sounds like regular deathmatching but with a limit based on time or frags. "The beauty of this type of game is

that it brings back the 'play for 10 minutes' experience which has been missing from gaming for so long," Bleszinski added.

Players without an internet or LAN connection can still get into the action, courtesy of the computer-controlled Bot. Epic boasts that the new Bots have an enhanced artificial intelligence, resulting in improved level navigation, understanding of lifts, swimming, door triggering, and use of pick-up items. They can also decide which weapon is best to use for any situation and understand team commands. These muthas are going to be tough! If you find yourself getting smoked by Bots too often, a Novice Mode will be included that will reduce their speed as well as the damage they can inflict. Not that we'd need it, of course.

Other new goodies include a Jump Mode, allowing players to jump twice as high as they normally would throughout the entire match,

while the Hardcore Mode makes the weapons more deadly, and runs the game at accelerated speed. Gamers can now communicate with other players including, they claim, computer-controlled ones, through a new Voice Messaging feature. Finally, if you're not in the mood to play, you can set up a Spectator Cam anywhere in the level and watch, for the ultimate in deathmatch voyeurism.

While two of the new weapons remain a secret, the third piqued our interest — the Team Cannon, which automatically targets opposing team members or individual players in deathmatches. This bad boy should give a significant advantage, if you can get your hands on one.

Good news for everyone who thought the original *Unreal* firearms were too wimpy — existing weapons are also supposed to get some enhancements, too, including new moves and sound effects. Another new toy will be called the Translocator (just a fancy name for transporter). It's not known at this point if they will be mobile or have a fixed placement in each level, but their inclusion should alter some existing strategies (Campers should love 'em).

The enhanced user interface and new command line options, *Unreal Tournament* could challenge the *Quake* online throne. The determining factor may be the release date — if *UT* beats *Q III* out then this summer really will be unreal. ▶

—CHUCK OSBORN *is made of meat and animal by-products, and he adds, is entirely real.*

Inside this archaic machine is the remains of Al Capone, no really. We'll have a live unveiling on FOX hosted by Geraldo Rivera.

THE ROYAL SEAL OF APPROVAL
"If you wanna crack skulls with the big boys, the _Panther XL_ is the weapon of choice."

-John Romero
Chairman: ION STORM
CO Creator: DOOM and QUAKE
Creator: DAIKATANA

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DAIKATANA

Daikatana. Best game of 1999. I stand by it!

Do you remember if there was a game here somewhere, sometime, some while ago? Like it, loathe it; love Romero, hate Romero; you can't deny that *Daikatana* is now a fascinating property. Ion Storm was a controversial developer almost before it set up shop in those plush, yet plastic, downtown Dallas offices.

Those "John Romero's gonna make you his bitch" ads started things on a downward spiral that culminated with the recent furor over departing staff.

But enough of that gossipy crap. *Daikatana* was always a captivating game with an enticing premise and a monumental design doc. We want to know: Is it all still on track? Is the game nearly finished?

The game. What's up with the damn game?

According to *Daikatana* head honcho (and the still very much alive) John Romero, "Right now, the entire team is concentrating on fully completing the first episode of the game (maps, weapons, models, AI, etc.) and we're aiming to have it done by the end of January. It's looking really great;

much better than I expected back in 1997 when we were using the *Quake 1* technology," he adds.

In a nutshell, *Daikatana* is a first-person shooter spanning four periods of history as the hero, Hiro, tries to find the fabled *Daikatana* – a sword of stupidly wonderful power. What this gives the designers, in essence, is the opportunity to create four distinct worlds, along with the weapons and diabolical beasts that fit those periods, ultimately creating an ambitious, wide-ranging shooter. Such an ambitious design document suggested that there would be around 80 different monsters and a load of weapons.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER →	Ion Storm
PUBLISHER →	Eidos
RELEASE DATE →	June '99
API SUPPORT →	Direct 3D, OpenGL, Glide

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED   EXCITED   AROUSED

THE HYPE

The plan is to make *Daikatana* a new paradigm (sorry, caught *Next Gen* disease) in first-person shooters.

THE HURDLE

Quake III Arena's coming, as is *Unreal Tournament*. Bizarre company shenanigans may effect sales.

THE HIT

Like it or not, every gamer wants to know how this game will finally turn out. Morbid curiosity or genuine excitement?

(top) The Lycanthir attacks before being blasted by Nharre's Nightmare.

(above) The Ragemaster gets immolated by a weapon that looks like Shadow Warrior's rocket launcher. (inset) A Navy SEAL captain isn't fazed by the whirring Slugger.

KILLING TIME

The following is a brief list of things you could likely accomplish while waiting for the oft-delayed release of *Daikatana*. Now get to work.

→ Read *War And Peace*

→ Make your own game based on the *Quake II* engine

→ Make 8 billion servings of minute rice (give or take a billion)

→ Make John Romero your bitch

→ Decode the menu in *Return Fire 2*

→ Knit a sweater large enough for Dom DeLuise

→ Get really close to the front of the line at the DMV

→ Get that damn Chumbawumba song out of your head (I get knocked down, but I get up again...)

→ Stack two boxes in *Trespasser*

→ Get a date (it could happen)

→ Find a copy of *Zelda*

→ Win at solitaire

→ Replace Jon Stewart, who replaced Craig Kilborn, who replaced Tom Snyder on "The Late, Late Show"

→ "Get over" the disturbing sight of Judge Judy naked – well maybe there isn't enough time for this one

"We've cut down the number of monsters to about 55 or so. That's still way more than the typical 16-20 that you get in today's FPS titles. The individual monsters' abilities haven't been toned down — just the sheer amount," said Romero. The early plan t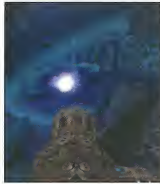o allow you to play deathmatch as any of those 80 monsters has fallen by the wayside. It's one of those features Ion Storm would like to add, but it does have to ship *same* time.

The coolest weapon and monster incorporated thus far? Romero mentions the Slugger, Nharre's Nightmare, Shotcycler and Sunflare (one from each episode). Any idea what they are? Us neither, since we've yet to see the game in action. And it's the same with the monsters, although they say the Ragemaster 5000, Griffon, Lycanthir and Navy Seal Captain are all pretty cool. But we'll have to wait until around June-ish to find out for sure.

The sidekicks, Hiro's accomplices in this epic quest, are still around and will be dropping in and out throughout the entire game, too. Here is an interesting twist in the strategy (and incredible test of sidekick AI): If one sidekick dies, it's game over. You have to help them in combat, but this also means they're going to have to be pretty handy on their own.

So what's up with the game, you ask? Some of the team have turned their attention to getting the multiplayer worked out (and the *Daikatana* Deathmatch test on the Mplayer game service will be in full swing by the time you read this). And, work continues on the single player side for all the episodes, tweaking monster AI, sidekick scripting and weapon balancing.

Take a look at the screens, and admit it: You're really damn curious, aren't you? Controversies aside, *Daikatana* is going to ship and still has an impressive list of features, not to mention the advantage of having seen what *Half-Life* has already achieved. Don't flame me about *QIII Arena* and *Unreal Tournament* – *Daikatana* has a full single player experience to be enjoyed, and that's something we certainly want to see remain in the genre. Undoubtedly, *Daikatana* is the most anticipated first-person shooter of 1999 (or Rob is high – your call).

–ROB SMITH's *getting worried looks from his colleagues for his "born-again" faith in* Daikatana

FIVE QUESTIONS

ALWAYS READY TO TACKLE THE MEDIA'S MOST INSIGHTFUL COMMENTARY, JOHN ROMERO EVEN AGREED TO SLUM IT ONCE MORE WITH PCXL'S FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: So, what did you make of *Half-Life*?
A: Wow, what a great game. I loved it! It definitely had the most immersive single-player mode I've played in a long time, maybe since Duke 3D. *Half-Life* is definitely one of my favorite FPS games of all time.

Q: *Daikatana*: Game of the Year 1999. Discuss.
A: Okay, sounds cool. If I'm going up against *Quake III*, then I'm going to be hoping for a *Jedi Knight*-like victory!

Q: Is *Daikatana* Ion Storm's only chance of silencing the naysayers?
A: Definitely not – *Anachronox* and *Deus Ex* are going to be some awesome games that retain our high quality standards.

Q: *Charlie's Angels: The Game.* What should be the focus of the design doc for this game?
A: The focus of the design doc should be ... long nipples.

Q: Who should play Lara in the *Tomb Raider* movie? And Duke in the *Duke* movie? And Hiro in the *Daikatana* movie?
A: Lara = Nell McAndrew, Duke = Jake Busey, Hiro = Chow Yun Fat

The Ragemaster's evolution from sketch to in-game model – well executed.

http://pcxl.ign.com

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WARZONE 2100

How does a no-name, no-license, brand-new RTS stand a chance?

I t's a valid question: Why would anyone want to spend a couple of years developing a brand new RTS game with no license or other familiar element to attract the mass gaming market, a field dominated by C&C and the WarCraft/StarCraft games? When 7th Legion, Dork Reign and Total Annihilation were all released on the same day, it was evident only one could achieve

any kind of success. TA was the break-out, while dross like Conquest Earth is now consigned to the trash bin it so richly deserves.

Eidos' own Commandos scored huge success in Europe. Why? My theory is that it was A) tangible — people understand good Allies against evil Nazis; and B) accessible —the WWII setting doesn't allow for crazy futuristic weaponry (everyone's seen the old war movies).

So what's Warzone 2100's chance? It's set in a post-apocalyptic future where the U.S. has been devastated. But Pumpkin seems to think that this is a good idea. According to Alex McLean, Pumpkin's Head of Engineering, "It gives us the most freedom to base the game where you recover lost technologies and develop a new society. Everybody knows about what Earth is currently like, and therefore no

great leap of imagination is required to picture the Warzone 2100 setting."

Warzone 2100's key successes will stem around two core elements: first, the rotating 3D world that took a year to develop, initially in Glide, and then in D3D; and second, the ability to create your own units. While there will be a limited number of units (in the vein of a StarCraft-style game), the

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER →	Pumpkin Studios
PUBLISHER →	Eidos
RELEASE DATE →	Spring '99
API SUPPORT →	Glide, D3D

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED   EXCITED   AMUSED

THE HYPE

Revolutionary technology will push traditional RTS gameplay in an exciting new direction.

THE HURDLE

It's name doesn't begin with C&C or end with 'Craft. RTS is tough, because of the dominance of these two franchises.

THE HIT

Rotating 3D camera angles are an advance over TA and others. And the continuing storyline is a great twist.

A variety of environments, vehicles, and perspectives gives Warzone 2100 a chance to be something different — a chance.

The developers at Pumpkin managed a very cool fire effect — which they have managed to massively overuse. Looks real cool, but it could be too much.

RTS 2100

Seemingly everyone is making a new "revolutionary" realtime strategy game. We'll save 'em some time and money with this time-tested formula that they are probably going to end up using anyway. Follow steps 1-9 carefully and you too can make a killer RTS game.

1. Set in post-apocalyptic future

2. Have three balanced alien races (four is "revolutionary")

3. Include a sultry, albeit mechanical, female voice over

4. Create a bizarre alien resource to collect and give it a forgettable name that no one at PCXL can consistantly spell correctly

5. Make sure vehicles that collect said resource are real dumb

6. 3D rotatable, bump-mapped, poly-wrapped, color-lit, crapalicious visuals

7. Fold out collectors box with different 3D holograms on the cover

8. Purchase old and forgotten movie license, like *Mad Max*

9. Wrap it all up and tell the marketing/PR department how damn "revolutionary" this game is

flexible research and unit design process lets you mold a force to your liking. As more technology is discovered, researched, and made available, VTOL aircraft, hovercraft, and cyborgs will be designed, while existing units and weapons will be upgraded.

The mission progression has a great slant that seems certain to make the game world more immersive. Rather than a series of connected, but ultimately disjointed, single missions, *Warzone* tells the tale of an evolving battle. What you have left at the end of mission one carries over to the next engagement. New technologies are thrown

in between encounters to push the development along, but even in the beta build we played, the sense of continuing battle was compelling, even if the between-mission briefings were a little clumsy.

In the post-apocalyptic future, power supply and resource protection will be incredibly important, requiring a careful balancing of power generators and oil derricks, and the effective recycling of destroyed material. Balancing this open-ended style will be the real challenge. "We are trying to balance things by ensuring that it is possible to win the next mission. In cases where the player doesn't have a great force left, bonus power will be supplied through the introduction of oil barrels," explained McLean.

Warzone also sports some impressive graphical treats in the

fully 3D world. Explosions are clean and fiery and the sound effects compliment the action reasonably well. (The flame thrower tanks in the early game are hugely effective against the enemy vehicles, but you need machine guns to mow down troops.) In this early build, the AI was still far from complete. Units made some effective decisions, but would stand by and watch as your buildings were destroyed. That said, the simple interface makes setting patrol patterns (as well as orders to withstand different levels of damage before retreating) fairly easy. Since units also gain experience in much the same way as *Myth* manages, keeping that veteran tank unit alive can attain ridiculous importance and cost way more units' lives.

Pumpkin has definitely incorporated some innovative features

into *Warzone*. Backed by a solid new technology, and an admittedly decreasing amount of clone competition, it certainly has a chance to be a viable alternative to *C&C2*. But that's where the fundamental problem lies: Will *Warzone* merely be an alternative, or can it stand on its own two feet? It will need support in the online world through matchmaking service, in addition to high ease-of-use to break through, but the control mechanism has to remain simple so that the opportunities of the compelling war can be played out to their fullest.

— **ROB SMITH** *is cynical, but would still genuinely like to see non- "name" games get any play time they deserve.*

Apparently in the year 2100 the earth will be made of polygons, texture maps, and colored lighting.

You're an angel. Your name is "Malachi." That's ancient Hebrew for "bad ass mother."

HISTOGRAM   AVG. SCORE ▼

10
8
6
4
2

PREVIOUSLY ON DRAKAN

Our previous *Drakan* preview focused mainly on the single-player game, the joys of dragon-flight simulators, and Rynn's bum. This time around, we're even more eager to slowly peel back the layers, take a closer look at the multiplayer experience, and see how the total game is shaping up.

DRAKAN

It's the dragon, right? Babes dig the dragon.

When we last took a look at *Drakon*, we were duly impressed with its incredible graphics and superior flight. Since then, Psygnosis has graciously provided us with a new build of the game. Now, we're taking another trip back to the fanciful land of *Drokon* to explore its multiplayer potential.

A strong feeling of deja vu struck after installing this game. The heroine, Rynn, looks almost exactly like the original sketch of Lara Croft, right down to her long ponytail, swinging with the rhythmic rigidity of a metronome. While playing the first dragon-free level, the idea that somebody had accidentally written **"Drokon"** on a preview copy of *Tomb Raider*

IV crossed our minds more than once. On top of that, the level design is reminiscent of *Turok*, and similar weapons. Even the dragon-riding experience is reminiscent of the *Panzer Dragoon* series, but not nearly as limited. Although the game borrows from its predecessors, at least it borrows from the best.

To be fair, the version of the game we've previewed is still early so there is plenty of time for improvement. Multiplayer is like

This is still a great view, isn't it?

the single-player game except that up to eight players can each choose their own Rynn (with unique skins) and play against each other via Internet or LAN. Hopefully, more characters from which to choose will be included in the final release. While we enjoy staring at Rynn's posterior as much as anybody, we also like variety. Surely there are some

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER →	Surreal Software
PUBLISHER →	Psygnosis
RELEASE DATE →	Q2 '99
API SUPPORT →	Direct 3D/Glide

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED   EXCITED   AROUSED

THE HYPE

A combination of *Tomb Raider* and a dragon flight simulator could make for an interesting hybrid.

THE HURDLE

With such an innovative idea, why did the designers decide to clone Lara, right down to her ponytail?

THE HIT

Drakan will soar if the ground and flight sim halves are integrated successfully into one coherent product.

Typical...all the girls we meet run away and carry mace.

http://www.pcxl.com

other voluptuous virtual vixens living in the land of *Drakan*?

Three distinct play modes will be released in the final version of the game. A Dragon Match will pit dragon-riding players against each other in air combat. Icons strewn around the environment can be picked up for different dragon attacks like fireball breath or lightning blasts. The Battle Challenge is pure melee combat fought on the ground, without the help of any dragon friends. Search for other players and bash in their
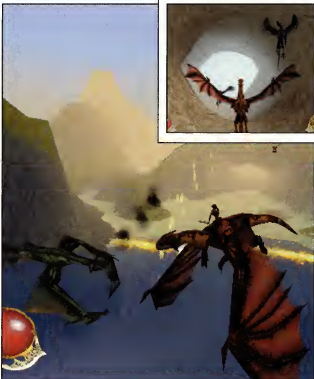

Artists labored over her shiny, bouncing breasts and apparently added the face as an afterthought — men after our own hearts.

heads, it's that simple. And, the Queen of the Dragons campaign is a bit more elaborate and has more interesting sound. The QoD map contains five dragons, each of which is bonded to a hidden soul stone. The dragons are initially hostile, so the player must find a soul stone on foot before he can call one down for a ride. Once in flight, you can wreak flaming terror upon other players in the sky or on the ground. Being the first to find a dragon will be a major advantage, so we hope there will be plenty of long-range

weapons scattered around to give everyone a fighting chance.

The only multiplayer mode available for preview was the Dragon Match, but that's also the one we were the most jazzed about trying. (Dogfighting dragons? Yeah!) Unfortunately, it still needs a lot of work. Attempting to play a two-person match by way of LAN worked fine — until we came anywhere close to one another. Lagtime made the game unplayable, as frame rates dropped to one frame per five seconds, or crashed our computers altogether. This is also a game that

screams for flight stick support, but it hasn't been implemented so far. And, the current control scheme is awkward, because aim and fire is controlled through your mouse, while control movement and secondary weapons are executed on the keyboard. It might be a hassle to change controls between the flight and ground portions, but we'd rather have that option over no choice at all. Still, there's a lot of potential here and, after more development time, we'd love to give the world of *Drakan* another whirl.

—CHUCK OSBORN isn't afraid of dragons because he wears asbestos underwear.

FIVE QUESTIONS

WE WERE ABLE TO PULL *DRAKAN* LEAD DESIGNER, ALAN PATMORE, OFF HIS PET DRAGON LONG ENOUGH TO ANSWER OUR FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: Does it bother you that so many comparisons are made between *Drakon* and *Tomb Raider*?
A: Yes and no. Yes, because the only similarities between *Drakon* and *Tomb Raider* are that they both have female lead characters and they are both third-person. Beyond that, *Drakan* is completely different.

Q: Are there any "unexpected" features that made it into the game which you decided to keep?
A: The primitive giants original AI was designed to pick up objects (Rynn included) and throw them. A bug occured where the giant would carry you around and could still be attacked. It was cool, so we kept it.

Q: What games do you play when not working on Drakan?
A: *Baldur's Gate* and *Half-life*.

Q: Will it support flight sticks?
A: We support all devices, but the game is designed for mouse/keyboard.

Q: Before Surreal, what did you do?
A: I worked at a wireless telephone company in marketing. It was boring so I hid in the back and played games.

If you get bored, you can obliterate snowflakes.

CREATURE CREDITS

Dragons must have the world's worst agents. You'd think they would be fielding offers left and right for meaty roles in blockbuster movies, but all they ever get are "sword and sorceror" flicks. We'd like to help out by suggesting a few projects for the serious dragon actor

DRAGON NIGHTS
ABOUT: A young dragon is lured into the porn industry and becomes a success based on the size of his wings
ENDING: Dragon incinerates director

REMAINS OF THE DRAGON
ABOUT: A dragon butler falls in love with a fellow servant, but is unable to show his true feelings
ENDING: Dragon fries employer to a crispy brown

DRAG-ON
ABOUT: A cross-dressing dragon tours the country lip-synching old disco favorites while searching for love and acceptance
ENDING: Dragon torches audience

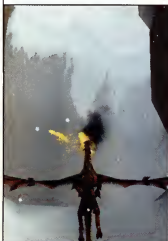**BROADWAY DRAGON ROSE**
ABOUT: A small-time talent agent loses clients when they discover he's a dragon
ENDING: Dragon fries about his future, cremates client base

WHO ARE THEY?

According to the press release Bohemia Interactive is a "noted" Czech developer. Exactly what they are "noted" for we're quite unsure. We went to their website and they have apparently done many Czech-like things. Unfortunately the site is in Czech. We do know that Czechs are excellent hockey players. That help?

FLASH POINT

WWIII? Now, when did that happen?

I hope Tom Clancy and Red Storm are happy. After being besieged by mindless first-person shooters since the success of *Doom*, people weren't expecting a brilliant game like *Rainbow Six*. Far from being mindless, it incorporated strategy and teamwork into a military action game and ended up selling tons of units. Success like that isn't ignored – it's cloned.

Flash Point, from Czech Republic developer Bohemia Interactive, strives to be more than a *Rainbow Six* knock-off. Sure, you still command a military unit, but you also get lots of new toys like jeeps, trucks, tanks, helicopters, and even jets. Interactive Magic boasts that you will have access to 25 controllable vehicles in addition to that old standby, walking (or running like mad if a tank turret is

pointed up your ass). You also have the choice of playing the action from first-person, third-person, or overhead map views.

The city of Prague might seem more like the backdrop for a spy thriller than the home of computer game development, but if there's one thing those wild and crazy Czechs can identify with, it's Cold War paranoia. *Flash Point* takes place in a world where the Soviet Union never disintegrated, and Starbucks never conquered the U.S. WWIII has left the two reigning superpowers devastated (not to mention radioactive) by nukes and other weapons of mass destruction. In a fit of wishful thinking, all military factions have whittled down to two sides: The West (NATO-based) and the East (Soviets). (Yeah, only if vodka had become a legally recognized form of currency.)

Military buffs will be happy to know that the equipment not only looks great, but is also historically accurate. You've got your standard-issue UAZ-469 jeeps, M60A3 and BMP-1 tanks, and AH-1 Cobra and A-

You get to fly a helicopter. See this picture? It's a helicopter.

10 Warthog jets. The pre-alpha version of *Flash Point* has incredibly detailed vehicles that look so real it's almost like being on the battlefield. Small graphic touches like dust clouds and changing weather add to the realism without being distracting. The environment and background graphics aren't nearly as detailed, but they get the job
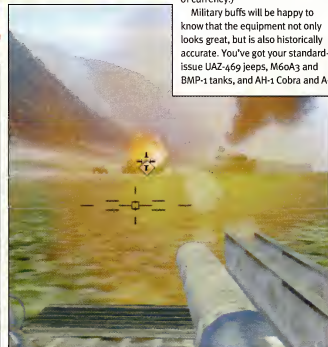
See that point over there in the distance? It flashes when you hit it with a big frickin' shell.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER →	Bohemia Interactive
PUBLISHER →	Interactive Magic
RELEASE DATE →	Summer '99
API SUPPORT →	Direct3D and Glide

INTEREST GAUGE

INTERESTED EXCITED AROUSED

THE HYPE

Travel by foot, tank, or helicopter, while giving orders to your squad. Will up the ante for military action-strategy games.

THE HURDLE

Could lose focus by allowing player control of too many different vehicles. Jack-of-all-trades are usually master of none.

THE HIT

Perhaps too ambitious for its own good, but if I-Magic can pull it together, this one could be a winner.

done. Besides, who wants to stare at pretty little houses when there's Russkie butt to kick? Sound effects are about what you would expect for this type of game, pulling you into the action without sounding like the developers were only trying to impress you with the size of their explosions. No namby-pamby, violin-swelling soundtrack here, just good old-fashioned sounds of mayhem, war, and destruction.

You play as the ultimate career soldier (think Kurt Russell in *Stargate*, but definitely not *Soldier*), starting out in the infantry, equipped only with an assault rifle and loads of ambition. As you rise through the ranks, you get more responsibility and access to better vehicles. But don't think you're going to win the war by yourself. You've got other soldiers to command and, just as in *Rainbow Six*, running around blasting anything that moves is not a very good idea.

Light resource management is essential as you plan your attacks

See this guy? He's about to become the bits of chunky flesh on the bottom of tank treads.

based on the availability of troops, fuel, and ammo. The single-player game assigns your man to a series of escalating missions, which should offer quite a bit of variety in tasks. It's good to know every level won't be "seek and destroy."

As can be expected with such an early build, control is not yet refined. Aiming your assault rifle takes a little getting used to, since your rifle barrel lags behind your mouse cursor. It feels like you're lining up a gun turret instead of aiming a rifle. Speaking of which, the tanks handle more like monster trucks than heavy, plodding warmachines. Addressing these issues should be first priority for the developers.

Unfortunately, with only two sides from which to choose, multiplayer support is limited to head-

to-head games via LAN, modem, or the Internet. This seems like a real oversight given that most online games now support more than two players. Individual selectable countries participating in a full-scale, ass-kicking war would've been ideal.

So, Mr. Clancy, I hope you're real proud of yourself. I'm optimistic Bohemian Interactive will be able to make this game work, but if it doesn't, then it'll be partly your company's fault for raising the bar so high. Maybe a year from now we'll be talking about *Flash Point* clones. It could happen. Seriously.

– CHUCK OSBORN bets that in a battle between the East and West, Australia is gonna get screwed.

MILITARY MANUEVERS

We all know about the pincer move and other military staples, but we've gathered a few maneuvers that seem to be gaining popularity. Remember, we are professionals, so please don't try these at home
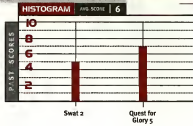

THE PICARD MANEUVER
THE PLOY→
Straighten your tunic, pour two glasses of Romulan Ale, and ask the gal from Rigel 6 if she has ever been "beamed" by a bald starship captain
RESULT→ Women reminiscing about "Jean-Luc" over a cup of Vienna Roast coffee

THE TAILHOOK MANEUVER
THE PLOY→ Invite female guests to a Navy convention, sexually harass them, and attempt to cover the whole thing up
RESULT→ PCXL staff parties will never be the same again

THE CLINTON MANEUVER
THE PLOY→ Look firmly into the camera, waive your finger, and purse your lips while denying any wrongdoing
RESULT→ No change: Public still knows their leader is a horndog. PCXL now hiring interns

FIVE QUESTIONS

IS WAR REALLY HELL? WE ASKED *FLASH POINT* DESIGNER/PRODUCER MAREK SPANEL TO TELL US ALL ABOUT IT.

Q: The game takes place in the shadow of WWIII. When did this happen and why didn't we hear about it?
A: WWIII happened in 1981. Where were you? The moon?

Q: What is a flash point?
A: (1) The lowest temperature at which vapors above a volatile combustible substance ignite in air when exposed to flame, (2) A point at which someone or something bursts suddenly into action or being, (3) A game that is really hot (Ed: That sounds made up).

Q: What games do you play when you're not working on Flash Point?
A: NHL99, Duke Nukem 3D

Q: How do you say, "We will crush you, American dog!" in Czech?
A: Rozmackame te na padrt, americky pse!

Q: War, what is it good for?
A: Absolutely nothing ... Say it again.

"Is that a turret, or are you just happy to see me?"

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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

HISTOGRAM   AVG. SCORE   6

10		
8		
6		
4		
2		
	Swat 3	Quest for Glory 5

BABYLON 5

Soap opera sci-fi TV gets turned into space opera epic gaming

Not to piss on anybody's pancakes or anything, but big-name game licenses are train wrecks waiting to happen. Whatever bizarre entertainment-related alchemy that turns developers' brain cells into lead, it seems to happen the instant, and I mean the nanosecond, somebody realizes that since they have a popular, promising license, they can just crank out any dry, fuzzy turd. *The Simpsons, The X-Files, Jurassic Park, Star Trek* ... How the

hell do you screw up a "Star Trek" game? Anyway, it was with this exact spirit of unbridled pessimism that I drove, wincing and braced for impact, to Yosemite Entertainment in scenic Oakhurst, California ("Now With Four Traffic Lights For Your Convenience"), to check on the progress of *Babylon 5*. I walked into the demo room, took control of my space fighter, pointed it dead-on at the nearest

object in sight, leaned on the throttle for two full minutes, and *nothing on the* screen changed.

And I started to smile. Yosemite was doing it right.

Let me explain. Space is big. Really big. At long range in a vacuum, some huge jumpgate structure is gonna look crystal-clear and deceptively close, but unless you're a capital ship with H-bombs for engines, it's gonna take you a while to close the distance, especially if you've got things shooting at you. Your fighter in *Babylon 5* moves the way a spacecraft should, with attitude thrusters sending it into a full roll-pitch-yaw

In the future they discover 4 wings work better than 2.

tumble if you mess up. It's disorienting as hell, unless you're close to something huge like *Babylon 5* or a jumpgate, and then it's downright terrifying. Netter Digital (creators of the original CGI for the series) has provided Yosemite with the original digital ship models, which were then used as tem-

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER →	Yosemite Entertainment
PUBLISHER →	Sierra
RELEASE DATE →	Spring '99
API SUPPORT →	3D Support: Direct 3D

INTEREST GAUGE

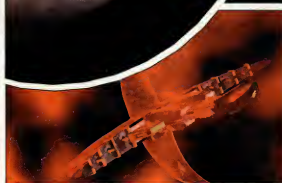INTERESTED   EXCITED   AROUSED

THE HYPE

A no-nonsense, hardcore 3D space combat sim set in the B5 universe.

THE HURDLE

Keeping the player entertained in a finite-yet-unbounded universe.

THE HIT

Original graphic assets and series actors in custom-cooked FMV should help this game reach its target audience.

The graphics in B5 look incredible, and look very similar to the show.

Glowing nebulas and all of the bizarre ships from the TV show are included in the game, but the developers promise much, much more.

plates for the lower-poly versions in the game.

Co-designed and co-authored by J. Michael Straczynski (the TV series' Creator and Executive Producer), the game isn't set to be just a *B5*-flavored shooter, but a thorough space combat sim. For you *B5*-heads out there, it's set

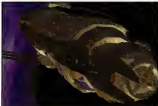somewhere between the end of Season Five and the beginning of the Crusade.

The player is an EA (Earth Alliance) pilot with military objectives (results of Earthgov's self-serving goals), but also one with the responsibilities of the "interstellar community of allies" to shoulder. While the game is initially centered at *Babylon 5* proper, Straczynski says current plans allow the player free run of virtually the whole universe – open space, near-base operations, jumpgates with accompanying traffic, and realtime operations in the creepy, fiery, extra-dimensional hell known as hyperspace.

Appropriate to a show with occasional heady overtones, *B5*'s fluid mission structure is meant to challenge players not merely on

the mechanical or military level, but even on the personal judgment level. Straczynski says the missions are meant to strike a "delicate balance between what you think you *should* be doing versus what you feel you *must* do."

While relatively unfettered by existing storyline restrictions, *Babylon 5* does feature custom-made FMV sequences using the show's popular characters, as well as alien special effects make-up done by John Vulich's Optic Nerve (the same people who do the show). *Babylon 5* is an ambitious title to say the least, and while even the early space flight model looked and handled great, we're not out of train wreck country yet.

Babylon 5 is touted as the largest, most complete space environment ever presented in a computer game – nearly every "location" mentioned in the show is modeled and navigable, includ-

ing hyperspace. The cynical gamer has good reason to be that way — that's a lot of space. Here's hoping for the best. By all indications, however, the board is green and we are go for launch.

—**CHRIS HUDAK** *found a pool table and a Japanese restaurant, and cleaned up at both.*

FIVE QUESTIONS

B5 DESIGNER MARC HUDGINS WAS CAUGHT OFF GUARD BY THE DREADED PCXL "5 QUESTIONS."

Q: We understand you've included a secret in-game Catfight module between the female characters. Why?
A: Everyone loves a good catfight. Duh. Getting the motion-capture down was a bitch, but fixing the sensors in place with a saline paste solution was cool.

Q: Who would win in a fight, the hot commander chick or Babylon 5 creative consultant Harlan Ellison?
A: Harlan Ellison, no question. It'd be a massacre. He's a tough sonofabitch.

Q: If players want to, they can go berserk and fire on their own forces. Whatcha gonna do, tough guy?
A: Yeah, you can do it. And you're gonna get your ass whooped by every ship in the game.

Q: What's the funniest thing about J. Michael Straczynski?
A: (Quietly into receiver) Oh, dude – you don't wanna ask that question.

Q: What in God's name do you do in Oakhurst, California on a Wednesday night?
A: Mmm. Well. Uh, that's unprintable. That's ... yeah. Yeah. I don't know. [*Ed note: This is one of the best answers we've heard to this question*]

Big weird alien spaceships in 1600 x 1200 resolution is a space geeks dream come true.

IF SOMETHING BLOWS,
WE WON'T LIE
ABOUT IT.

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Imagine Games Network

Teamplay

Ever since we first received the early beta of *Tribes* we've been praising it as the future of multiplayer Internet gaming. Normally the PCXL staff are selfish glory hounds, but in a typical match of *Tribes* you'll see Rob "I don't need no stinkin' team" Smith repairing a generator, Ed "Glory to me" Lee setting up turrets,

Even breasts... oh, we used that one.

and Dan "Got no time for defense" Egger patiently defending a flag. Have we lost our lust for action? Hardly. But we have seen the light of teamplay and how exhilarating each game can be. With *Unreal Tournament*, *Team Fortress 2*, and *Quake III: Arena* on the way, the future looks good. Just remember that *R6* and *Tribes* were leading the charge.

KILLER GAME

Any game that receives a 9 or so from our rigorous scoring system warrants this nifty logo. If you see the PC ACCELERATOR Killer Game stamp, you know it's a game worth buying. Only the true classics deserve this elite status, so don't expect to see this symbol often.

killer game!

SUICIDE

If we're going to create a stamp for the truly great, then it's only fair to label the unforgivable shit as well. It takes an abominable score of 1 or 2 to qualify for the noose around the neck. Stay away from these games at all costs.

SUICIDE

CRITICAL ADD-ONS >>

Whenever a joystick, soundcard, or other computer accoutrement improves a game, we'll stick a corresponding logo on the review. We include only those devices that make the game better; just being compatible isn't good enough. If you don't see the logo, then that particular add-on doesn't do much for the game.

TILT	3D SOUND	
GAMEPAD	MULTIPLAYER	STEERING WHEEL
FORCE FEEDBACK	JOYSTICK	

ACCELE-RATED >>

This additional rating provides specific information on how a game performs on a variety of competing 3D chipsets. We test games on up to four major 3D cards and report back with the true test for any 3D accelerator: how it affects the game. We base these ratings on graphic enhancements, framerates, and performance to give you a good idea of how a game will perform on your 3D card.
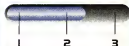
(Note: Performance may vary depending on the card and the setup of your system)

ACCELE-RATED

CHIPSET

1	2	3
No significant difference from software, this game and card do not justify the expenditure	The card provides solid enhancements that make the game more immersive and enjoyable	This is what 3D cards are all about. Every effect is utilized, and the smooth framerate makes a huge gameplay difference

RATINGS >>

Our rating scale is a simple 1 to 10 — no decimal points, no obscure percentages, just a straight score that gets right to the point. Before we score games, they undergo countless hours of testing on different systems, with different 3D cards — our reviewers even play the games under the influence of various narcotics. In the end we stamp a single score on the game, which is essentially a numeric value of the game's worth. We love games and always try to look on the bright side, but when a pile of steaming crap comes in, we won't hold back and won't allow our readers to waste their money on said crap. You can count on our reviews for honesty, insight, and maybe even a few laughs.

GRAPHICS
Rendering quality, framerates, and special effects all contribute to an immersive gaming experience.

SOUND
Visceral sound effects and appropriate music can help make a good game great.

DEPTH
How often you find yourself playing a game, and how long, are good indicators of its quality.

DESIGN
The backbone of a game is the overall vision behind it, from characters and weapons to levels and missions.

RATING 0

Since we focus our coverage on fast-paced games, we don't get a chance to review every PC game that comes out. But in just a few words, we can tell you everything you need to know about the games we didn't review and cut out all the crap.

GAME	INSIGHT
REMINGTON TOP SHOT	SAFETY TIPS? WE DON'T THINK SO
OPERATION CD-ROM	BOARD GAME = BORED GAMER
STRATEGO	PLEASE SEE ABOVE
LOONEY TUNES COSMIC CAPERS	NOTE TO SOUTHPEAK: STOP IT ALREADY!

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

Flawless. Perfect. Almost as good as *Half-Life* and significantly better than anything else — **10**

A true classic. An excellent game that is well worth the money — **9**

A great game, but may feature a few minor flaws that are easily overlooked — **8**

A good, solid game that lacks the inspiration or vision of a truly great game — **7**

A game that rises above the average due to a hook in style or gameplay — **6**

The definition of mediocrity, this game doesn't commit any major crime other than being ordinary — **5**

A game that doesn't exactly suck, but probably won't hold your interest for long — **4**

OK, maybe there's an element of redeeming value in this game, but it still sucks — **3**

Very little of interest, this game is deeply flawed and should be avoided — **2**

Utter crap — Complete shit – A barrel of bullocks – in other words it sucks really, really bad — **1**

81

| DEVELOPER --> Dynamix |
| PUBLISHER --> Dynamix |
| REQUIRED --> P166, 32 MB RAM, 155MB Hard Drive, 28.8 modem |
| IDEAL --> P2 266, 64 MB RAM, cable modem, 3Dfx accelerator |

Tribes

Walk into the valley of death ... with friends

MULTIPLAYER

ACCELE-RATED

Tribes only supports 3Dfx-based cards, so if you have a TNT alone or another D3D card you are shit out of luck. With a 3Dfx card the game looks good, thanks to its large environments made up of fairly simple, large polys that no doubt keep the packet size low and help the frame rate over the Internet. The weapon effects are also top notch.

VOODOO 2
1   2   3

VOODOO 1
1   2   3

MATROX G200
N/A

RIVA TNT
N/A

API SUPPORT: Glide

A bead of sweat rolls down your forehead as yet another kid is chosen. You cross your fingers, hoping the next name will be yours, but it isn't, and the humiliation continues. Billy "The Armpit" Armstrong, Wes "High-Water" Dotson, and Ritalin-addicted Bobby Stanton are all picked, leaving only you and three future members of the Physics Club. If there was any other way to play on a team you would do it, but you are in grade school and this is how things work ...

If you've forgotten why on Earth you submitted yourself to this kind of torture, just to be on a team, play *Tribes* and it will all come flooding back to you. The shared glory, the thrill of making a big play and the call to action when a teammate needs help — all part of the draw. This online-only (no single player off-line practice is available at all) shooter has many commendable facets and continues this new vogue trend of teamplay focus.

The beauty of *Tribes* is that its design rewards you for experimenting with various playing styles. When you

I wait all day to sell one monkey, but no one comes.

join a match, you see people playing defense, using heavy artillery, performing the thankless job of targeting, repairing objects, and even supplying forward troops. Not everyone is a glory hunter. The game rewards players who try different techniques and balances each playing style with all the rest. If it wasn't this balanced, people would all choose the one best playing style and the teamplay would go
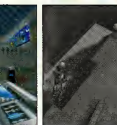
Tribes has more gameplay variety than a pack of *Quake* clones, which means you'll actually have to think while you play. Normally we are very much opposed to this kind of design, but for *Tribes* we'll make an exception.

out the window.

Tribes' depth shines through its carefully constructed playing style and balance. Like the best strategy games, it enables you to jump in and enjoy the action without knowing every tiny detail of the game's mechanics. However, it has so many options (each of which greatly impacts the gameplay experience), that even longtime players will be able to try something new whenever they like. This is the elusive action/strategy blend that few titles get right, but *Tribes* nails almost perfectly.

The action side of *Tribes* is nearly flawless. Each player is equipped with a jetpack and must fight enemy teams over huge, open terrain. Jetpacks put a wicked twist on typical first-person shooter strategies, adding a real

The light armor (above) is best for quick flag runs and rapid movement, but nothing beats the heavy armor (above right) for creating havoc.

third dimension to the tactics and allowing the developers to incorporate the huge floating battle fortresses that comprise the signature look of *Tribes*. Other nice touches include eight almost perfectly balanced weapons, making long distance shootouts as exciting as face-to-face encounters, as well as vehicles that add air support and rapid troop movement to an already active battlefield.

On the strategy side, *Tribes* is both innovative and incredibly complex. Instead of picking up weapons and items laying about, you must select inventory at special weapons stations where you can choose between 3 armor sizes, 5 packs and 7 deployable stations. The combinations and uses for these are limitless, and each combination creates a different playing experience. Also, you must defend these stations, because if they are destroyed or their power cut off, your team is doomed. It's this variety and strategic depth that will make *Tribes* as fresh (if not fresher) in six months

than it will be the day you snatch it off the shelf.

Technically, *Tribes* is nothing short of amazing. The graphics are solid, and the enormous outdoor environments are exciting, realistic, and always unforgettable. But more important is the fast and reliable network code. Out of the box, *Tribes* allows you link up to the full list of available servers. Then you pick the one that suits you best, depending on which map, game style, and even ping. Once you're in the game, you rarely run into lag or other similar problems. In fact, you almost forget you're playing online.

The only problems were its limited training mode, and consequently the learning curve of getting up to speed with opponents who already know the maps and

are well versed in those various playing styles. But once you figure things out you'll be hard pressed see any negatives.

Tribes is destined to be one of those titles that you just can't ever take off your hard drive. Its combination of simple, yet highly detailed strategy, tight network code, and fast gameplay makes it one of the most enjoyable playing experiences we've had in a long time. And best yet, you won't ever suffer the indignity of getting picked after Nathan "Clam Hands" Munroe. ▶

— DAN "FARTRHINO" EGGER
always gets picked last in Tribes *team selection*

TEAM PLAYERS

We have already seen how many players fill support roles rather than just run for the flags. If you are willing to work with others you can rule the game. Here are a few of the best two-man strategies we've managed so far.

PAINT AND FIRE
One player uses heavy armor and a targeter while the other uses a targeting laser to lock on enemy objects

SUPPLY RUN
One play-r uses heavy armor and carries an inventory station while the other carries an ammo station. The two then setup and defend a way point

DISTRACT AND ATTACK
One player foolishly lures enemy cannons away while the other sneaks in and steals the flag

BEAVIS AND BUTTHEAD
Both players fill the airwaves with repetitive command quotes, frustrating the enemy (and teammates) so much they loose focus on the tasks at hand

SIM BASE
Both players use heavy armor to pack their base full of defenses extra stations and anything else they can drop down

THE JAMMER
One player carries a sensor jammer pack, protecting the other from detection by enemy turrets as he sneaks in and destroys the enemy base

We could have written a funny caption for this picture, but decided to play more *Tribes* instead.

Rainbow Six: Eagle Watch

DEVELOPER →	Red Storm
PUBLISHER →	Red Storm
REQUIRED →	P166, 16MB RAM, 100 MB hard drive space, *Rainbow Six*
IDEAL →	P200, 32 MB RAM, Direct 3D card, 56.6Kbps Internet connection

Nothing wrong with more of a good thing

ACCELE-RATED

The new levels have much better textures, but the jagged edges and generally unpolished graphics of the original remain. The real world environments and genre-changing gameplay make this all a minor gripe. It isn't going to overheat your 3D card, but without one, the game really looks awful.

VOODOO 2			
1	2	3	

VOODOO 1			
1	2	3	

MATROX G200			
1	2	3	

RIVA TNT			
1	2	3	

API SUPPORT: Glide, D3D

The Russian space shuttle is one of five great new missions.

When the original *Rainbow Six* reached the **PCXL** offices all work stopped and we couldn't get enough. But by the time *Eagle Watch* arrived in our murderous hands, we had moved on to *Half-Life* and *Tribes*, long forgetting the unforgettable (if that makes any sense) team-killing antics of *Rainbow Six*. But those memories soon came flooding back.

The five new missions in *EW* are tougher than trying to get a date with a supermodel, and the enormous levels deliver a totally different type of deathmatch. Quite simply, this expansion is an instant hit. While *Eagle Watch* is only a mission pack, I'd argue that it offers more than certain sequels (*Tomb Raider III* comes to mind).

The terrorists are up to their usual terrorist tricks, having taken hostages and set up post in such locales as the U.S. Capitol Building, a Russian space shuttle, the Taj Mahal, Big Ben, and the forbidden city (you know ... the place where they perform the forbidden dance, the lambada). However this time around the terrorists are smarter, faster, and generally a real pain to kill – especially when compared to the original terrorists, who exhibited the intellectual capacity of a herd of McDonalds fry cooks. This makes the missions, in single-player or co-op multiplayer, extremely challenging at times.

While the single-player elements are good for a few more hours of gameplay, the real reason to get *Eagle Watch* is for the additional multiplayer maps. The massive size, detailed textures, and real world settings are perfect for another couple of months of *R6* deathmatching.

Some new modes were added (terrorist hunt, all modes with terrorists, assassination), but in the end, the team survival game is the best of the lot. The larger levels allow for a much greater strategy element, and make 8-on-8 matches far superior.

One of the few disappointments with *EW* is that it still suffers from numerous bugs that really should have been fixed. The grenade still magically disappears on occasion, walls can still be seen through at times, and getting connected online for deathmatch is never a guaranteed success. We learned to forgive these flubs in the original, but this add-on pack really should have addressed them.

Despite this minor gripe, I wholeheartedly recommend *EW* to anyone who owns *R6*. I'd also strongly suggest that if you don't already own *R6* you should get off your fat ass and buy it. The PCXL staff is in desperate need of some fresh meat to kill on The Zone. ➤

— **MIKE SALMON** *is the guy on the R6 server most likely to shoot his teammates in the back of the head for no good reason and then claim it was an "accident."*

GRAPHICS
The new levels are more detailed, but jagged edges and 2D sprites remain.

SOUND
Same music, same sound. Very good, but nothing new.

DEPTH
For an add-on pack *EW* packs plenty of gaming.

DESIGN
New levels make for great team survival games.

RATING 8

➕ Pluses
→ More glass to break
→ New DM levels
→ More *R6* goodness

Minuses ➖
→ Still doesn't track points from game to game
→ Damn grenade bug
→ Terrorists with good aim

New hiding places make for some great strategies in multiplayer. However the grenade still results in piles of dead teammates who never saw it coming.

DEVELOPER ⟶	BioWare Corp.
PUBLISHER ⟶	Interplay
REQUIRED ⟶	P120, 16MB RAM, 200 MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL ⟶	P166 MMX, 32MB RAM, 300MB hard drive

Baldur's Gate

Get your hands off me, you damn dirty elf!

MULTIPLAYER

3D SOUND

This is an amazing likeness of yours truly.

Who keeps magic potions in a barrel, anyway?

UNFORGOTTEN

How can something misplace an entire realm? We've created quests to a few more "unforgotten realms" that TSR seems to have, uh, forgotten.

EYE OF THE EGGER
Journey into the eyeball of PCXL's own Dan Egger to battle those little bits of dried up goo that accumulate when you stare into a camera for too long

MENZINDABATHROOM
You've got to go real bad and the nearest place is a highway rest stop. Navigate the stall's room without being attacked by the ogres lurking within

THE POOL OF JACK PALANCE
Relax, swim, get a tan ... but beware the gravel-voiced pool owner, who will make you do pushups with him if caught. Believe it ... or not

ENGINE HACK
Lead a fearless band of hackers into the bowels of the Tomb Raider game engine in search of the elusive "Nude Raider" code

AT&T'S THE FORGOTTEN CALLS
A quest to hide all the 1-900 porn charges you've run up from your family and girlfriend

---

he last few years have been tough for The Forgotten Realms. *Descent to Undermountain* was so atrocious and buggy that long-time fans wished Beholders would invade the Interplay offices. (And after *Redneck Deer Huntin'* we would've paid the airfare.) Following another long wait, and a notion that things were finally going to be done right, *Baldur's Gate* has left the building.

The prologue begins in the city of Candlekeep, which is really an opportunity for you to get used to the controls and gather some history on what's up in the Realms. Your character, a 20 year-old with a secret past, has been raised by the kindly Gorion. (Hint: don't get too attached to him.) At first, I was pissed because the prologue plays like your standard adventure game, rather than an RPG. You know, the "find my magic scroll and I'll give you something" variety. But once Candlekeep is a speck on the horizon, the real game begins.

You control a party of up to six characters of AD&D staples. The storyline isn't restrictively linear, but also isn't nearly as open-ended as *Daggerfall*. Everything else Forgotten Realm-ish, including the arcane AD&D rules, is strictly enforced.

Clearly inspired by *Diablo*, the action is shown in a top-down, isometric view. Characters are small, but detailed, and behave more realistically than the two-frame animations of older AD&D classics like *Dungeon Hack*. (My biggest RPG pet peeve is that most monsters move with the grace of a stick.) Professional voice actors were used, thankfully, but I wish they had more to say. After the twentieth time of hearing my buddy Imoen claim "You're a queer fellow, aren't you?" I was ready to smite her myself.

Make no mistake; this game is not for deathmatchers. Just for fun, I created a chaotic evil character and attacked the first barkeep I came across. (Admit it — you were going to do the same thing.) Fifteen seconds later, death came swiftly. Learn quickly that the spacebar is your friend. It'll pause the game and let you plan your party's next series of actions. Your characters come complete with AI that lets them fight without guidance, but they won't pull off complex maneuvers without your help. Frankly, it's hard enough keeping them together since group movement sometimes resembles a Keystone Kops routine.

Be warned — some computer configurations cause the game to crash often, so check for patches

Oops ... wrong cave!

and save frequently. Multiplayer gaming is available, but my luck starting matches through Gamespy or Heat was poor. The problem with the online game is that it regurgitates the single-player storyline, and doesn't come close to replacing the communal AD&D experience. Still, *Baldur's Gate* is the game to play when you can't invite friends over for the real pen and paper geekfest. ⟶

— CHUCK OSBORN *is a lawful, good sort of guy, but often has chaotic evil dreams*

GRAPHICS
Not ground-breaking, but if you liked *Diablo* you won't be disappointed.

SOUND
Ambient sound is good and the music, while generic, is passable.

DEPTH
Rich story and numerous sub-quests ensure you'll stay awhile.

DESIGN
You may find the "blue screen of death" as often as a kobold, but the control is adept.

RATING 8

➕ Pluses
⟶ A good AD&D game for a change
⟶ Lots to do
⟶ Killing elves is fun

➖ Minuses
⟶ Buggy on some systems
⟶ Online can't match real-life AD&D
⟶ Voice-overs get really repetitive

Hmm ... should we go to IHOP or hunt gibberlings?

DEVELOPER →	Blizzard
PUBLISHER →	Blizzard
REQUIRED →	P90, 16 MB RAM, 80 MB hard drive, 28.8 modem, *StarCraft*
IDEAL →	P266, 64 MB RAM, 200 MB hard drive, T1 line, *StarCraft* skillz

StarCraft: Brood War

The only EP we've ever considered for a Killer Game award

OTHER BROOD WARS

Dad's yelling at them from behind the curtain.

**THE JACKSONS
THE COMBATANTS:** Jermaine, Marlon, Jackie, LaToya, Janet, Tito, Rebbie, Randy and Michael. Oh, and don't forget their dad
THE OUTCOME: Who the f*** knows (or cares)

**THE CORLEONES
THE COMBATANTS:** Sonny, Fredo, Kay, Don Vito, Don Michael, Don Juan (wait a second ...)
THE OUTCOME: Unnecessary sequel

**THE MENENDEZESESES
(OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT)
THE COMBATANTS:** Eric, Lyle, and their dead parents
THE OUTCOME: A book deal, a movie deal, and interviews with Barbara Walters ... oh, and prison time

**THE DERSHOWITZS
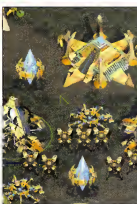THE COMBATANTS:** Cain and Abel (well, Dershowitz coulda been their last name)
THE OUTCOME: Cain picks up stick, clobbers Abel, The Big Guy is displeased

**THE SALINGERS
THE COMBATANTS:** Charlie, Bailey, Claudia, Owen, and the hot chick played by Neve Campbell
THE OUTCOME: Their fighting is interrupted by a sudden and fatal outbreak of cancer. And Neve gets nekkid

The delicate balance in *StarCraft* is tweaked by adding new units, but thankfully remains superb. Well done.

If you're like me, ever since the announcement of this inevitable *StarCraft* expansion pack, you've been waiting eagerly for it to be finished, and lookie here ... From the great cover image of a dreadlocked Kerrigan glowering at you, to the actual, uh, game, *Brood War* pretty much rocks. The only game I played over my vacation consisted of the new single-player missions. More on those later ...

The new stuff: 6 units, 24 single-player missions, 3 tile sets, and more than 100 multiplayer maps (playable, as always, on Blizzard's free battle.net) — all for 30 bucks.

The six new units (two per race) are almost instantly assimilated in your mind as an integral part of the *StarCraft* universe. They just "fit." And in some cases they are quite powerful. Examples? You've got your Terran medic, a young lass who makes suggestive comments like "Where does it hurt?" and heals infantry. For the Zerg, you've got the Devourer, a heavy air-to-air beastie that mutates from the Mutalisk. And for the Protoss, you've got the Dark Archon, who can instantly convert an enemy unit, *AOE* style. (For lots more on these new units, check this month's strategy section.) All of these new units add considerable depth to a game already rich with strategic possibilities.

In addition to giving the player more toys to tinker with, the new units were created to address specific weaknesses in the three races. It's gonna be tough for newbies on battle.net to figure out how to fight the new units, especially the cloaked Dark Templar.

Although we wanted to show you the new units in these shots, we forgot to hit "capture" every time. So sue us.

Heh heh heh, more wins for Evil Ed. Because the new units upset the famous *SC* balance of power, a balance bulldozer barged through the original units and structures during the course of the beta, leaving in its wake a path of changed costs, tweaked fire rates, and modified build speeds. So what we've got here is a slightly different game — one that makes early rushing a bit harder and games tougher to win than by simply swarming an enemy base with troops. It also makes skillful attacks on well-defended bases more manageable — so turtling in with Terrans isn't as effective.

The single-player missions are well designed, continuing to experiment with different types of objectives than the old "collect resources, smash enemy" model. The well-designed characters, which were a surprising highlight of the original campaigns, are back and their stories continued. Kerrigan, the Brood Queen, is the central character — nothing wrong with that (see "Women We Love To Play," pg. 115, for more).

Challenge level is a bit higher than the original, but that's expected and welcomed, yet it doesn't become too overwhelming till the very end of the Zerg campaign. But by then you're too caught up in the story to care. Yes, that isn't something I'd expect to say about an RTS.

So the main question here is, what's not to like? It's everything a *SC* fan coulda hoped for from an EP, and frankly, there's more game value here than in some sequels.

— ED LEE can be found on battle.net in "1-on-1 newbies only."

GRAPHICS
New tile sets count for something. The arctic one is easy on the eyes.

SOUND
Good voice acting; funny hidden lines like, "It's not *WarCraft* in space!" and "I know its not 3D!" are very cool.

DEPTH
StarCraft is an incredibly deep game even without the new units.

DESIGN
You must be kidding? It's like, Blizzard, man.

RATING 8

➕ Pluses
→ New units are great
→ Even more balanced as a whole
→ Lotsa new maps

➖ Minuses
→ Costs 30 bucks
→ It'll give you herpes
→ Just kidding

STARCRAFT EXPANSION SET:

Retribution

DEVELOPER	WizardWorks
PUBLISHER	GT Interactive
REQUIRED	P90, 16 MB RO RAM, 30MB hard drive, 2x CD-ROM, SVGA card, 14.4 modem, StarCraft (duh!)
IDEAL	PII 233, 64 MB RAM, 100 MB space, 8X CD-ROM, cable modem

Frustribution

MULTIPLAYER

GETTING EVEN

DEATH WISH
THE WRONGED: Charles Bronson in the pissed-off stage of his career
HOW THEY GOT EVEN: Enough gratuitous violence to warrant an "X" rating

REVENGE OF THE NERDS
THE WRONGED: The usual crew of misfits including that guy from E.R.
HOW THEY GOT EVEN: Scored with sorority girls

REVENGE OF THE JEDI (ORIGINAL TITLE)
THE WRONGED: Luke "Farm Boy" Skywalker
HOW THEY GOT EVEN: Whined, until the Emperor's head imploded in sudden fatal decompression

MONTEZUMA'S REVENGE
THE WRONGED: The Aztec ruler, Montezuma, by invading Spaniards
HOW THEY GOT EVEN: Giving American tourists on spring break a nasty case of the runs

AVENGING ANGELS
THE WRONGED: Students by day, avenging street-walking hookers by night
HOW THEY GOT EVEN: After being hired by a private investigator who communicated only by speaker phone, they killed a short, fat man named Bosley

A fter suing the shit out of a hapless developer who had released an unauthorized StarCraft level pack, Blizzard has given the go-ahead to quickie dev WizardWorks (best known for their scintillating Deer Hunter franchise) to make the first authorized pack.

First off, here's what your 30 bucks gets you: 30 new single player missions divided between the races, and a bunch of new multiplayer maps (77 regular, 17 co-op, 10 "quick," and 17 team). No new units here, that's for Brood War, but Retribution does give you a few new heroes. Fine so far; that's, uh, a lot of maps.

But here comes your first "but" (well, third, actually): Start playing the single-player missions, and you soon run into a big fat problem, and one that is sadly a common RTS flaw. OK, buyers are likely gonna be SC vets, so you'll want to make the missions tougher. Fine — tough is good. But instead of "good AI"-tough, they use the "just-stack-the-odds-way-way-against-you-until-you-beg-for-mercy"-tough. To be fair, WizardWorks might not have the means or clearance to mess with the AI, but the result is frustrating.

For example, you'll start a Protoss mission with mid-level tech, a

You'll never see this many minerals in single-player.

few cannons, dragoons and zealots. Build up for a few minutes, and here come the attacks. Now build up defenses ... Oh crap, there's three of 'em and they own the entire map! Uh oh, they're chipping away at me with siege tanks and plague spells. How nice, I have to turtle in cuz I got nowhere to go. Right, let me get a huge amount of high-level units for a decisive counter attack. Well ... I got my butt kicked, but if I reload and try again I might be able to beat — ah, screw it.

You get the idea — against those odds and no expansions, you don't have much room or time to screw around. Build a tight defense, assemble an offensive force powerful enough to sweep the map, repeat. Life is too short to plow through it all, just to say you beat Retribution (like, wow).

But getting back to the multiplayer maps, there are quite a few of 'em, ranging from average to good. The fact that some are

Protoss junkies getting their fix off a shield generator.

designed for team vs. computer, as well as team vs. team, is a nice touch, although most people will stick with the larger eight-player regular maps.

Is this enough to justify the purchase of Retribution? Our sources say no. Unless you're really, really desperate for new single-player maps and/or too lazy to create your own or download 'em from the Web, save your cash for Blizzard's own Brood War.

— ED LEE *doesn't take losing to the computer well.*

GRAPHICS
Looks like StarCraft. About as nice as 256 color SVGA gets.

SOUND
Nothing's been added, outside of some new voice acting.

DEPTH
Single-player sucks, but still a lot of multiplayer fun to be had.

DESIGN
Average to good map design for multiplayer; single-player challenge is based on overwhelming odds.

RATING 4

Get used to defending — you'll be doing it all of the damn time.

➕ **Pluses**
→ Multiplayer maps
→ Fairly cheap
→ New heroes

➖ **Minuses**
→ Crappy single-player design
→ Throwaway plot
→ Not enough value for the money

Dark Vengeance

An ass to kill for...

ACCELE-RATED

There are certainly no problems on a 16MB TNT card, so that would be the option of choice. With a Voodoo2, some of the smooth graphical glitz was a little choppy at times. The spell effects and colored lighting certainly make running this under acceleration the preferable route.
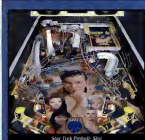
VOODOO 2

TNT

API SUPPORT: Direct3D

SADISTIC RETRIBUTION

In the spirit of proper vengeance, we feel the need to piss on some of the really rancid games that have come across our desks.

MEAT PUPPET→ Ever seen a game with no redeeming qualities? If not, lay your eyes on this godforsaken piece of garbage with heinous animation, hideous control, and idiotic story line. Truly one of the worst games of all time
SCORCHER→ One of the most sadistic racing games on Earth. With tracks that would have been too much for the Marquis de Sade, Scorcher was more of a profanity generator than a game. Great un-accelerated graphics (for the time) and a neat atmosphere couldn't help unworkable controls and terrible design
THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN→ How do you ruin a stylish, evocative, and damned strange French film? Turn it into a pitiful third-person adventure with absurd location-based puzzles. And make sure the whole last third of the game is missing entirely. Nice graphics, but thoroughly empty and annoying
STAR TREK PINBALL→ Take pinball, suck all the life out, and paint on a freaky Star Trek façade. Highlights include dribblingly boring pinball physics and a viewing angle that's just plain wrong. Anyone know the Klingon word for "complete crap"?

A
fter failing to climax twice in a row now, perhaps it's time for Lara to find a replacement. GT Interactive and developer Reality Bytes apparently feel they have just the thing for the Lara-depressed in the form of *Dark Vengeance*. This dark, violent medieval fantasy is potentially a viable alternative to the latest third-person action/adventures, though *Dark Vengeance* is not without its problems.

Dark Vengeance gives you a choice of three different characters, each with specific abilities and combat styles, along with a unique opening level to introduce them. Nanoc the Gladiator is an over-sized meat popsicle with a big axe, while Kite the Trickster is the agile femme fatale with the best-looking ass yet in a third-person game. And Jetrel the Warlock is the foul-tempered magic-wielder who generally shoots at things from a distance.

Characters gain new, more powerful weapons and greater hit points, but that's the extent of any RPG-like development. Each warrior does have his own specific attacks, however, and some of them are pretty cool: Exploding fire grenades, raking claws, lightning balls, freeze blasts — some 27 in all. Puzzles are your basic "get key/use key" sort of thing, but usually involve neat-looking, albeit unoriginal, mechanical devices.

Dark Vengeance has a nice visual sense, with well-designed levels mixing medieval structures, outdoor environments, caverns,

Kite's back looks good, and her front ain't too bad either.

The movie *The Guardian* made us scared of cheesy killer trees.

mines, and other fantasy fare. Lighting effects are impressive, textures look great overall, and the characters are detailed and well-animated. Many of the roughly 30 monsters are very cool, too, like the colorful stained glass window knight, vile demons, and fiery rock men.

The audio is excellent, with spooky, medieval-sounding music, and great sound effects, ranging from footsteps to monster noises. With the exception of Kite's sexy tembre, most of the voice acting and dialogue, however, is laughably bad.

Everything looks great, until you realize the gameplay's big shortcomings. For one, it's far too easy for your character to get hung up on walls, obstacles, or even just corners. On top of that, the control scheme is rather odd. Face an enemy, and a glowing diamond appears, indicating he's been locked in as your next opponent; a shift in diamond color indicates your best aim. Unfortunately, every time you attack, this aim meter resets itself. It's confusing and annoying, forcing you to watch the diamond while missing the great-looking effects going on around it.

While the characters have three attacks and a block (each attack has a different speed and power), you can't smoothly or quickly link moves. Consequently, if you need to block suddenly while in the middle of an attack, you're SOL.

If it weren't for the questionable control, *Dark Vengeance* would have been far more worthwhile,

Even evil elves are not immune to Kite's charms.

especially considering its inclusion of 32-player deathmatch and capture-the-flag modes, complete with spectator options.

But as it stands, *Dark Vengeance* really fails to capture the excitement and intensity that the action and setting promised, and that's a shame.

—JASON D'APRILE *will soon have his own dark vengeance ... ah yes, he will! Muhahahahahaha!*

GRAPHICS
Sharp textures, moody ambience, impressive lighting, solid characters.

SOUND
Great sound effects and a cool soundtrack, but nasty voice "talent."

DEPTH
Three characters, each with weapons and tactics, and 16 interesting levels.

DESIGN
Nothing we haven't seen before, but the levels are well-designed, with nice visuals in the puzzles.

RATING 6

➕ Pluses
→ Excellent graphics, lighting effects
→ Kite's ass
→ Decent treasure hunting

➖ Minuses
→ Control is unintuitive
→ The voice acting
→ Bad clipping

DEVELOPER ‑‑>	Factor 5
PUBLISHER ‑‑>	LucasArts
REQUIRED ‑‑>	P166, 32MB RAM, 55MB hard drive, 4X CD‑ROM, or D3D accelerator card
IDEAL ‑‑>	P200 MMX, 64MB RAM, Voodoo2

Rogue Squadron 3D

May the Force bewitch you . . .

ACCELE-RATED

Awesome 3D effects with Voodoo2 include smooth flying with realistic engine glow, realtime lighting, tracer trails and sensational explosions. This is the next best thing to starring in a movie.

VOODOO 2

1 ___ 2 ___ 3

VOODOO 1

1 ___ 2 ___ 3

MATROX G200

1 ___ 2 ___ 3

RIVA TNT

1 ___ 2 ___ 3

API SUPPORT: Direct3D

OTHER FORCES

(TO BE RECKONED WITH)

FORCE FEEDING‑‑> A heavy-handed process applied to political prisoners who go on hunger strikes.

FORCE FEEDBACK‑‑> A process for heavy hands designed to emulate impending doom. Until gamepads deliver 10,000-volt jolts, less than realistic.

FORCE FIELD‑‑> An impenetrable defense that ..lways seems to break down after two or three solid hits. Blind faith in system not recommended.

FORCE TEN FROM NAVARONE‑‑> An awful movie based on one of Alistair Maclean's lesser books. Not recommended for hungry viewers

FORCE SCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO‑‑> A brief speech written on the back of an envelope by the tallest bearded Wookie, ever

One of the problems with beauty contests is that you sit for hours, watching gorgeous babes parade back and forth in gowns and swimsuits until your tongue is hanging out and you're ready to beg Miss West Virginia to marry you and bear your children (not necessarily in that order). Then she opens her mouth to answer the final question about peace in the Middle East, and you discover that you've fallen madly in love with Miss Airhead 1999.

Rogue Squadron 3D is much the same. It's stunning to look at, and moves with fluid grace on the runway. But the time will come when you ask the game for something more serious, and it'll let you down. This latest entry in the continuing *Star Wars* universe is not a complete airhead, but it does have a glaring weakness.

The good news first: *Rogue Squadron 3D's* visuals (3D accelerator required) will raise the hair on the back of your neck. Music is straight off the *Star Wars* soundtrack, accompanied by screaming TIE Fighters, intermittent chatter from your wingmen, and shrieking droids when you take a hit.

Don't worry about the plot — we're between movies. The Death Star is gone and Luke Skywalker hasn't yet become a Jedi. Fresh from the Battle of Yavin, he leads the legendary Rogue Squadron as they build a power base from which to take on the Empire.

This is an action game, not a simulator. Whether you use a joy-

Cockpit view of a gun turret. An X-Wing nails a TIE Fighter.

stick, keyboard or gamepad, controls are easy, and if you have force feedback, you'll feel the jolt of laser fire against your shields.

All the well-executed missions are fought at ground level, not in black space. You'll engage the enemy on Tatooine, Kessel, and Mon Calamari. You'll fly the X-, A-, Y- and V-Wing airspeeders over sky cities, mountains, canyons, forests and oceans. You'll blow away giant walkers, droids, TIE Fighters, and other Imperial scum. And, for the first time, you'll get a sneak flight on a ship we're not supposed to name (Hint: Han Solo did smuggling runs in this surprisingly speedy clunker). The game is a hell of a lot of fun.

So what's the bad news? The Force has gone solo (and we don't mean fan). There's no multiplay — just you, your machine and the special effects. Once you finish the 16 levels and probe the three secret ones, you'll spend your time going over the same ground, trying to improve your scores.

And that's the problem. Like the vacuous blonde with the eye-popping measurements, *Rogue Squadron's* all gloss, with not much underneath. But it's surprising how appealing those smoldering looks can be.

— JOHN LEE *wears a Wookie suit in cold weather. No one notices the difference.*

GRAPHICS
Gorgeous. Shrieking TIE Fighters, explosions, tiny scurrying figures.

SOUND
Familiar themes guaranteed to suck in X-Wing and TIE Fighter fanatics.

DEPTH
Sixteen levels, plus three secret ones; but no multiplay. Once done, you play only to improve scores.

DESIGN
Imperial spacecraft, droids, turbolasers, both kinds of walkers, all of which make great targets.

RATING ⑦

➕ Pluses
‑‑> Gorgeous visual experience
‑‑> Good mix of missions & lots of 'em
‑‑> Trouncing the Imperial Empire

Minuses ➖
‑‑> No multiplayer support
‑‑> "Beat the clock" to earn medals
‑‑> Incredibly shallow

Taking on an AT-AT at night in a snowy canyon really is pretty good fun — for a short while.

Myth II

Find out exactly how fast you can get 20 people (and one dwarf) killed

MULTIPLAYER

ACCELE-RATED

The characters in *Myth II* are all sprites, so they aren't affected by 3D acceleration. The terrain and special effects, however, are most definitely affected. Voodoo 2's lack of resolutions over 800 X 600, and lower image quality make the TNT the clear favorite.

RIVA TNT

**VOODOO 2**

VOODOO 1

MATROX G200

API SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide

Y

ou might say that all games essentially fall into two categories: Stress reducers and stress inducers. At the end of the day we play stress inducers to have fun. But along the way, they might also give you a big dose of tooth-gnashing, twitchiness, frustration, and resentment for the people who made the game. Like *Thief, Trespasser,* and *Rainbow Six, Myth II* is definitely a stress inducer. But like all good games of this sort, it is good enough to keep you playing, despite your boiling blood pressure and dangerously shortened lifespan.
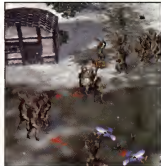
Myth II is a realtime strategy game with a narrow focus on small-scale tactical combat, and set in a slightly comical, but extremely bloody, fantasy environ-

ment. It's the sequel to last year's well-received *Myth;* but to be honest, it's not much more of a "sequel" to that game than *Brood War* (an EP) was to *StarCraft.* In other words, outside of a few cosmetic details, there's not much in the way of new gaming experiences to be found here. Of course, you've got new maps, game modes, units, etc., but it's basically just more of the same.

The core gameplay of *Myth II* is solid and deep, and while its interface (particularly the camera control) has been improved, it still takes some getting used to. In particular, assigning and recalling
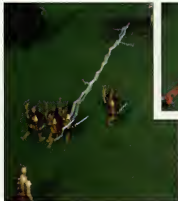
The picnic was going fairly well until someone in the kilt-wearing Scottish contingent suggested that Miller Lite "tastes great", the chant of "less filling" was followed shortly by this bloody massacre.

Capture the Flag is a much more tense game with limited units, not too mention the complete lack of underwear.

preset groups, a necessity for advanced RTS tactics (particularly for this game), is more of a pain than it needs to be. The single-player game is still helluva hard. Gameplay is based on making the most out of an always outnumbered group of units, each with different specialties. You have a dozen or so units to start a mission and basically that's it.

Winning missions will require a combination of careful planning, excruciating timing, and blind luck, which may elude you, even after several dozen attempts. Or if you're a wuss, or on deadline like me, you can step down the difficulty level a notch, but it doesn't go any lower than "Timid." (You gotta love games that make you feel like a moron.) But if you find most games not challenging enough, you'll probably get a kick

outta *Myth II*. In terms of conveying the chaos and unpredictability of real combat, the game does a better job than any other RTS on the market .

Like so many sequels these days, *Myth II*'s main problem is it just doesn't provide new gaming experiences over its predecessor. Granted, everything from the graphics to the depth have been updated and spit-polished, and the end result is a better overall game than *Myth*. But it doesn't really correct the flaws of the original (such as awkward unit management) to a great extent or make any kind of large-scale change or innovation.

That said, *Myth II* on its own merits is still a better RTS game

than 90% of the genre. This is still a great game in multiplayer, and worth buying — if you didn't get the original. ◗

— **ED LEE** knows he can beat the game on "Normal" given enough time, like say, another lifetime.

NEW UNITS

A quick rundown on *Myth II*'s new units.

WARLOCK
Myth II's new magic system is based not on charges, but on a replenishing energy bar. The Warlock can cast fireball and confusion.

HERON KNIGHTS
Essentially beefed-up versions of Journeymen, these are hardy warriors who can also heal.

STYGIAN KNIGHTS
Magically animated suits of armor, they are tough in melee and invulnerable to arrows and spears.

MYRKRIDIA
Fast, goat-like creatures who can tear through regular footsoldiers.

GREATER MYRKRIDIA
Throw multiple explosive projectiles at once.

MAUL
Hefty pig-like creatures — think evil Berserkers.

BREUNOR
Evil missile soldiers who can control wolves (but not wolves in sheep's clothing, we assume).

The Molotov cocktail-chucking dwarves are back and destructive as ever. They're still likely to blow up most of your own units.

GRAPHICS
New and better animations, textures, resolution; still the best RTS maps.

SOUND
Solid, with combat noises, ambient sounds, and strong voice acting.

DEPTH
Single player will keep you busy, and multiplayer is well supported.

DESIGN
This is a sequel in the loosest sense of the word.

RATING (7)

➕ Pluses
→ Challenging
→ Lots of strategic depth
→ Exceedingly gory

Minuses ➖
→ Too challenging
→ Doesn't feel like a real sequel
→ Improved interface is still clunky

P.S.X NATION ... Myth-take Driving Myth Daisy, Myth-ing in action, Myth-carriage, Chris-Myth

REVIEWS

TNN Outdoors: Pro Hunter

SUICIDE

How to completely waste the *Unreal* engine

MULTIPLAYER

ACCELE-RATED

Since TNN Outdoors: Pro Hunter uses the fancy *Unreal* engine, you know right off the bat that it's going to need a heavy hitting 3D card. Voodoo2 is your best bet, since it's about the only way to get those frame-rates up. As with all the other *Unreal* engine games, there's no support for Direct3D.

VOODOO 2

VOODOO 1
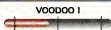
API SUPPORT: Glide

HUNT THIS...

SEAL CLUBBER → Head out into the wild Arctic armed with nothing more than a big ol' club adorned with rusty nails. Hover over breathing holes, and when seals pop up, whack 'em on their cute little heads. Get the expansion pack, where you sell their valuable hides on the black market.

JOHN HUNTER: THE HOOKER'S REVENGE → You've been a hooker for 10 years and can't take the shit anymore. Stalk the streets of New York, luring politicians and other assorted tricks to your lair, where you bash their skulls with your trusty hammer.

CELEBRITY STALKER → As a member of the paparazzi, stalk celebrities and snap revealing pictures for tabloids. Be sure to avoid police and psycho ex-husbands. Look for the bonus level where you secretly film the stars having sex with each other.

GERIATRIC HUNTER → In this exciting new hunting sim, you're the head of a nursing home who suddenly snaps. Armed with a baseball bat and a high-speed wheelchair, you navigate the halls, tracking down the old cooters who live inside. Keep an eye out for stray grandchildren for bonus points.

SORRY YOU ARE DISQUALIFIED

I've been hearing about these so-called "hunting games" for a while now, so I decided it was high time I check one out. After contemplating venturing out to the local Wal-Mart myself, I sent Salmon out for a copy of *TNN Outdoors: Pro Hunter*. (That pretty boy wasn't doing much anyway, and he needs to learn a lesson or two about what it means to be an underling.) Out of all the lame hunting games released in the last year, this one actually looked like it could be halfway decent. After all, the fine folks at TNN consulted on it, and if there's one thing they know, it's country crap like hunting. And, it sports that fancy-shmancy *Unreal* engine.

Like all the other hunting games out there, *Pro Hunter* attempts to simulate the experience of real-life hunts by sending you out into the wilderness in search of deer, elk, rabbit, and an assortment of other helpless critters. Unlike *Deer Hunter*, where you basically turned in a circle all the time, *Pro Hunter* actually lets you walk through the woods in realtime. The game even goes one step further by having your body temperature affect your aiming abilities. Damn, if that doesn't sound exciting.

Unfortunately, the game pretty much blows. The first problem is the steep system requirements. Now, as the super-rich CEO of

Here I am hunting quail with my trusty dog. Oops — he goes right past the flock of quail nearby and chases after a rabbit instead.

PCXL, I've got my Pentium II 400 with Voodoo2 SLI, yet the game chugged about as fast as a 600-pound man on a treadmill. As for you poor saps with lesser machines, you're screwed — *Pro Hunter* doesn't run at an acceptable level on anything below the PII range.

Now, the reason them there country hicks buy hunting games is because they simulate the real-life hunting experience, which can be summed up in one word — boring. If the idea of sitting up in a tree blowing a whistle gets you wet in the pants, well, have at it. But if you're a gamer, you'll be wishing that shotgun was real so you could shoot yourself (or better yet, the designers of this junk).

Not that *Pro Hunter* is all bad. The quick hunts are sometimes fun, like the time I went out and shot an entire herd of elk. Now that's gaming! But the tournament mode is a steaming pile of shit. In

order to progress through the tournament, your game cache must be of a certain size. Simple enough. But you might spend 30 minutes stalking an animal, only to be disqualified when it's not big enough.

The bottom line to this mess? The game is a system hog and is no fun to play. Avoid it like the plague and go play *Half-Life*. ➤

—CECIL BLOOMFELD *likes to roll naked through his piles of money. Back to work, Salmon!*

GRAPHICS
The graphics are nice but the trees look like crap, and sometimes the game swaps in the wrong textures.

SOUND
It sounds like the woods. Exciting.

DEPTH
The tournaments could have added depth if they weren't so frustrating.

DESIGN
The levels, er, woods, are all pretty similar.

RATING ②

Pluses
→ Best-looking hunting game
→ Shooting guns is fun
→ Strafing keys for those hard-to-hit deer

Minuses
→ No fun to play
→ Extremely boring
→ Waste of the *Unreal* engine

After playing this game for a little while, you'll become so pissed off that you'll shoot everything in sight.

Uprising 2:
Lead and Destroy

RTS meets FPS

MULTIPLAYER

ACCELE-RATED

If you've got a Voodoo-based 3D accelerator, there's a lot to like about U2's smoothly rolling terrain, dynamic cloud-filled skies and cool pyrotechnics. Gamers lacking 3Dfx cards may not be quite so impressed, however, as the software-rendered graphics lean distinctly towards the mushy side and the game's frame rate can slow to a crawl when a lot of things start blowing up.

VOODOO 2

VOODOO 1

API SUPPORT: Glide
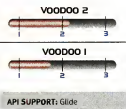
AI=ACRONYM IDIOT

The worst offenders when it comes to CGIA (criminal overuse of acronyms) are geeks and the military — try reading a Tom Clancy novel without a glossary. Computer gamers fit into the format. That's why we find ourselves playing an RTS, RPG or FPS instead of a real-time strategy, role playing game, or first-person shooter. Here's some more geek-speak shorthand we might see in the future:

APC (Airborne Pissing Contests) → Jane's and MicroProse are trying to corner the market with heavily armed titles like *F-15* and *Falcon 4.0*.

DSTPCS (Dick Stiffening Third-Person Chick Shooters) → Who do they think they're kidding, who'd they give Lara Croft a body like that?

BB (Bambi Blasters) → NRA types may object to our referring to their "sport" this way, but they buy their copies of *Deer Hunter* at Wal-Mart, so it's not likely we'll ever bump into them

O kay, so you're one of those types who thinks that top-down strategy games are about as exciting as watching another "Three's Company" re-run and best-selling RTS titles like *Total Annihilation* do about as much for you as the Starr Report did for Hilary Clinton's sex life. Moreover, the only time you employ strategy in your computer gaming is when arguing with your significant other about how a new 3D card will enhance your quality of life.

Well, fortunately, the people at 3DO and Cyclone Systems have produced a "strategy" game that's custom-built for active types like yourself. *Uprising 2: Lead and Destroy* is the sequel to last year's surprisingly successful (and unheralded) attempt at combining the RTS experience with a first-person shooter (FPS) perspective.

As with the parent game, *Uprising 2* places you in direct control of a powerful hovertank called a Wraith, which you navigate over varying 3D topography in an ongoing battle with the usual scum-sucking enemies threatening your world. This time, the heavies are an alien race named the Trich — but if you're anything like me, you probably won't give a flying frag about any of this background minutiae. One bad guy looks pretty much like another when he's locked up in your Wraith's targeting reticle.

Unlike other FPS games like *Extreme Assault*, there's a lot more to do than just blow the crap out of

The 3Dfx-enhanced graphics boast some attractive pyrotechnics.

anything that crosses your tank's path. You'll also need to establish and maintain Citadel bases from which you can build and expand an army of tanks, aerial assault vehicles, and soldiers to support your Wraith in the war against the Trich. Some basic micro-management skills are necessary here, but nothing so complicated that a diehard action gamer won't be able to pick it up in a matter of minutes.

Between its three training missions, 37 single missions, or three linear campaigns, *Uprising 2* boasts enough solo gameplay options to earn a spot on your hard drive for a healthy chunk of time. The game's dedicated Internet multiplayer support (Heat.net, Mplayer) and nifty stand-alone Scenario Map editing utility could extend that stay even further.

Granted, there might be action titles with better eye candy, and you sure as hell won't have to look very hard to find a strategy piece with smarter AI. But for a game that walks the risky path of trying

to appeal to two different audiences, *Uprising 2* does a surprisingly effective job.

—ANDY MAHOOD believes strongly in his and Amendment right to bear arms and join the uprising against despotic government control. The only problem is he lives in Canada, where there's no 2nd Amendment, no guns and no despotic leaders.

Missiles leave convincing smoke trails.

GRAPHICS
Native Glide visuals are impressive, but points off for no D3D support.

SOUND
Surround-sound is immersive but often repetitive.

DEPTH
Plenty of solo missions and campaign action to extend the game's shelf life.

DESIGN
Refreshingly original mix of RTS and FPS gameplay.

RATING 7

➕ Pluses
→ Cool pyrotechnics
→ Base-building strategy component
→ Strong online multiplayer support

➖ Minuses
→ Enemies possess no discernable tactics of any kind
→ No D3D support
→ Distinct draw-in reduces visibility

Gangsters:
Organized Crime

DEVELOPER →	Hot House
PUBLISHER →	Eidos Interactive
REQUIRED →	P166, 32MB RAM, 156MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL →	PII 233, 64MB RAM, 8X CD-ROM

A bad rap ...

MULTIPLAYER
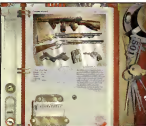
There's nothing quite like being an ass-stomping bad guy. You're surrounded by babes, wear the best clothes, and get to shoot people. Damn, if that ain't the life. And in this season of first-person shooters, it took the promise of a rip-roaring life of crime to pull me away from my rocket-launcher long enough to play *Gangsters*, a strategy mobster sim. And while I found delving into the gangland underworld enjoyable, *Gangsters* suffers from a couple of annoying gameplay setbacks.

Set in the fictional city of New Temperance during Prohibition, *Gangsters* casts you in the role of a small-time mobster looking to make his mark. To be successful, you must extort businesses, collect protection money, bribe the police, lay down the law with a Tommy Gun, and about a hundred other knee-breakin' tasks. You win the game by either going legit (but what's the fun in that?), eliminating the other gangs, or being elected mayor.

The first of two play modes is the Gang Organizer, where you assemble your teams of hoodlums, give orders, and take care of other administrative goings-on. Once done with that, you move into the Work Week, which is

This is the Gang Organizer, where you take care of "business."

based in a realtime mode from Monday through Friday. In this mode you watch as your boys go out and take care of business.

The idea behind the design is a good one, but it's got a few problems. It's too hard navigating the towns even when you're trying to find an enemy gangster. You also have to use the pause button way too often, whether you're changing orders, or engaging someone in battle. Also, the orders available to you during the Work Week are far too limited. In addition, the interface for the Gang Organizer never *feels* right. It seems like it fights you more than it helps you, and the annoyingly large number of small buttons makes it easy to forget to issue key orders.

And the manual isn't much help either. In fact, it's horrible. Even the tutorials aren't much better, because they go hand-in-hand with the manual. After a while, it seems easier to blindly grope along on your own.

That said, not all of *Gangsters* is bad. The strategy element of the game really shines, as you carefully manage every aspect of your organization, be it controlling extortion money or hiring hoodlums to patrol your territory. You can set multiple tasks for each of your men, so they can blow up a business that refuses to pay for protection, and then head over to the local orphanage to make a generous donation.

If you're a hardcore strategy freak, *Gangsters* provides the necessary fix. For those of you with no patience, you'll want to leave it on the shelf and play something that's a little easier to get into and uses a rocket-launcher. ➤

—Joey "Joe Joe" JUNIOR SHABADO likes to hang out at Mae's and act like a gangster.

GRAPHICS
City looks nice, gangsters move like real people, and gun fights are bloody.

SOUND
Though well done, the number of voices and city sounds are limited.

DEPTH
There's a lot of meat on these bones. The three endings guarantee replay.

DESIGN
Great idea, but execution is off. Interfaces are not very intuitive, and many aspects of the game are clumsy.

RATING 🙂

➕ Pluses
→ Extortion is always fun
→ Die-hard strategy appeal
→ Lots of depth

Minuses ➖
→ Huge learning curve
→ Interface is clumsy
→ The manual sucks the big one

Got a message that some unwelcomes have entered the neighborhood. I'll send one of boys to "work it out."

http://pcaclgs.com

PC ACCELERATOR March 1999 Gangster Pump is a ska band, not footwear. They do perform with a 350-lb stripper, however.

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The World's Greatest Sport

Ask anyone which sport is the best and you will most likely get a passionate, if not completely reasonable dissertation on why their favorite pastime is better than any other. Because sports fans are so fervent, we felt it would be intriguing to create an unbiased, scientific and indisputable study to determine which sport is the best overall. However, that seemed altogether boring (and our application for a big money government grant was denied), so we decided to determine the issue ourselves, with our own slightly biased, neo-scientific, and completely disputable study.

Judging ten very important categories, we pitted ambassadors from each of the big five professional sports (yeah, you heard us right, pro wrestling counts) against each other to see which would come out on top. Here were our results:

BEST BAD HAIR
FOOTBALL → Jimmy Johnson
BASEBALL → Don Sutton
HOCKEY → Jaromir Jager
BASKETBALL → Anthony Mason
WRESTLING → Ric Flair

WINNER → Baseball

DON SUTTON

BEST TRADITION
FOOTBALL → Tailgate parties
BASEBALL → Seventh-inning stretch
HOCKEY → Bench-clearing brawls
BASKETBALL → Celebrities in the courtside seats
WRESTLING → Battle Royals

WINNER → Hockey

FATTEST GUY STILL COMPETING
FOOTBALL → Gilbert Brown
BASEBALL → Cecil Fielder
HOCKEY → No fat guys allowed in hockey
BASKETBALL → Shawn Kemp
WRESTLING → Mark "Sexual Chocolate" Henry

WINNER → Football

MOST LIKELY TO END UP IN PRISON
FOOTBALL → The Dallas Cowboys
BASEBALL → Albert Belle
HOCKEY → The Norris Division
BASKETBALL → Chris Webber
WRESTLING → Big Boss Man

WINNER → Football

BIGGEST EMBARRASSMENT
FOOTBALL → Lawrence Phillips
BASEBALL → Florida Marlins
HOCKEY → Blood-thirsty fans
BASKETBALL → The lockout
WRESTLING → Androgynous wrestler Gold Dust

WINNER → Basketball

LAWRENCE PHILLIPS

WUSSIEST TEAM NAME
FOOTBALL → The Bills
BASEBALL → The Padres
HOCKEY → The Blues
BASKETBALL → The Nuggets
WRESTLING → The Bushwackers

WINNER → Baseball

BEST TEAM NAME
FOOTBALL → The Raiders
BASEBALL → The Pirates
HOCKEY → The Canucks
BASKETBALL → The Cavaliers
WRESTLING → The Legion of Doom

WINNER → Wrestling

LEGION OF DOOM

BEST DIRTY MOVE
FOOTBALL → Chop blocking
BASEBALL → Chin music
HOCKEY → High crosscheck
BASKETBALL → Elbow to groin
WRESTLING → Atomic back breaker

WINNER → Wrestling

DIRTIEST SOUNDING MOVE
FOOTBALL → The end around
BASEBALL → The double switch
HOCKEY → Poke check
BASKETBALL → 360 jam
WRESTLING → Piledriver

WINNER → Hockey

BEST ELECTED OFFICIAL
FOOTBALL → Jack Kemp
BASEBALL → Steve Garvey
HOCKEY → Peter Klima (not yet, but it could happen)
BASKETBALL → Bill Bradley
WRESTLING → Jesse the Body Ventura

WINNER → Wrestling

JESSE THE BODY VENTURA

THE SCORE
FOOTBALL → 2
BASEBALL → 2
HOCKEY → 2
BASKETBALL → 1
WRESTLING → 3

THE OVERALL WINNER →
Pro Wrestling

BIG BOSS MAN

There is no longer a reason to argue. Science has proven that Pro Wrestling is not only a real sport, but the very best sport. PCXL is now under investigation by the feds to determine whether or not the Salt Lake City Olympic Committee traded them sex for votes.

THE STANDINGS

The off-season for most of these sports means that we'll have to wait a few months for any new additions. Sorry :(

	GAME TITLE	W	L
BASKETBALL	NBA Live 99	2	0
	NBA Live 98	1	0
	NBA Action	0	2
FOOTBALL	NCAA 99	2	0
	GameDay 99	1	1
	Madden 99	0	2
GOLF	Links LS 99	4	0
	Tiger Woods 99	3	1
	Golden Tee Golf	2	2
	Pro 18 World Tour	1	3
	Fox Sports Golf 99	0	4
HOCKEY	NHL Hockey 99	2	0
	NHL Hockey 98	1	1
	Powerplay 98	0	2
BASEBALL	High Heat 99	4	0
	Triple Play 99	3	1
	VR Baseball 2000	2	2
	HardBall 6	1	3
	Microsoft Baseball 3D	0	4
SOCCER	FIFA 99	2	0
	Fox Sports Soccer 98	1	1
	Sensible Soccer 98	0	2

DEVELOPER -->	Papyrus
PUBLISHER -->	Sierra
REQUIRED -->	P60, 24MB RAM, 44 MB hard drive space, flannel mousepad
IDEAL -->	P166, 32MB RAM, 3Dfx accelerator card, any Allman Brothers CD

NASCAR Racing '99

Sierra Sports is at it again, and again, and again

ACCELE-RATED

You've got two choices when you play *Nascar '99*. The first is 3Dfx, which looks nice; the second is Rendition, which is decent, but not on the same playing field. There's no D3D support so TNT-only users are SOL (software-only losers).

DUAL VOODOO 2 SLI

VOODOO 2

RENDITION V2200

RIVA TNT
N/A

API SUPPORT: Glide, Redline

These drivers are fighting over their cousin, we assume.

The stuff coming out of Sierra Sports has been getting pretty spooky lately. Several months ago the company released a skiing title that was essentially the same as one already in stores only with the previous year number stamped on it. The company's football release (reviewed in next month's issue) is chock full of bugs; and now the traditionally strong *Nascar* series has shipped without much improvement over its predecessor. This is hardly an auspicious beginning for the newly named Sierra Sports franchise. What's up?

It's not that *Nascar '99* is a bad game. It has the same great physics model, driver AI, and customizability of the first game, and that's a great start. Unfortunately it didn't go far from there. The game has barely advanced over the original. Out of the box 3Dfx support makes it look a little better than the Rendition-supported *Nascar 2*, but anyone who owned that game and downloaded the 3Dfx patch won't see much new stuff in terms of graphics.

For those who haven't played the first game, this title will feel, well, archaic. Compared to today's racers like the flashy *Need For Speed III*, Sierra's own *Viper Racing*, and just about any other
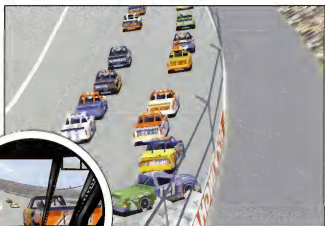
What kind of idiot turns right in a Nascar race? The wheel shouldn't even allow it.

recent 3D accelerated racing game, *Nascar '99* looks flat, slow and boring. The tracks are bland and ripe with pop-in, while the cars are plain and boxy.

Nascar '99 survives only on its depth and playability. It is as deep as you could ever imagine, allowing every possible tweak you could think of, and a whole bunch you never would. Adding the truck-racing mode adds depth to the hopelessly addicted Nascar fan, but for anyone else, it's a minor addition. Countless drivers, teams and tracks have been included, but that should be a given, rather than a source of kudos.

The game is at its very best when the track gets treacherous, and you find yourself in the middle of a crowded pack, jockeying for position with 30 other cars. Intelligent AI and realistic physics mean that you will have to use every trick in the repertoire of a great racer just to stay competitive.

Another notable feature of *Nascar '99* is a well-refined pit crew leader who warns you of oncoming trouble. Despite the bland graphics and uninspired game sounds, with a back-up crew warning you about nearby traffic and damage, it's enough to make you feel like you are in a real Nascar race.

With *Nascar 3* just around the corner this title is basically a waste of time for hardcore simulation fans and a little out of date for those looking to get started in this genre. Both groups should wait for the real sequel — this one is just a stopgap and nothing more.

GRAPHICS
Dated, and the crashes could have looked much better.

SOUND
The pit crew sound is great, the rest is not all that exciting.

CONTROL
The control is pretty spot on, but force feedback would have added a lot.

REALISM
The gameplay is about as close to real Nascar as you can get without the smell of ethanol.

RATING (4)

+ Pluses
→ Driving the wrong way on the track
→ The pit instructions
→ Hyper-realistic gameplay

Minuses −
→ Bland graphics
→ Clunky pre-race interface
→ No gun racks in trucks

http://

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DEVELOPER ⟶	Head Games
PUBLISHER ⟶	Activision
REQUIRED ⟶	P200, 16MB RAM, 70MB hard drive space, country club hall
IDEAL ⟶	P166, 32MB RAM, high tolerance for bad control

ACCELE-RATED

Extreme Tennis is EXTREME! It's out of CONTROL! It's OVER THE TOP! Oh yeah, it is also pretty BLAND! Your 3D card doesn't MATTER! It won't make a DIFFERENCE! I can't stop YELLING! These guys made PAINTBRAWL! What do you EXPECT?!

Extreme Tennis

If we hear "extreme" one more time...

Try as we might, none of the editors were able to determine exactly why this title was called *Extreme Tennis*. Endless hours of playing revealed not a single moment of anything approaching "extremeness" (as best we can define it). Sure, every once in a while a player would make a dive for a ball (actually, it happened all the time, thanks to an annoying bit of design), and some of the uniforms had "crazy" tiger stripes, but this is hardly extreme.

The only time we could use this word is by saying that this game suffers from some extreme suckitude. If you really think about it, tennis is only a refined version of one of the original videogames, Pong. But decades later, we get a new version of the old classic —

Martina Hingis isn't in *Extreme Tennis*, but she's a far sight better looking than anything that is in the game.

only slower, less intuitive to control, and much less fun.

The gameplay moves at a snail's pace, the ball physics are laughable, and the graphics will excite no one, but the major flaw in this game is its control. On standard back and forth play, the control feels sluggish and frustrating. And, when a ball is just out of your reach, a new problem becomes evident: The diving moves are all scripted. When the computer determines you need to dive, it pauses for a second and then runs the routine. This makes you feel like you've completely lost control of the game.

The AI is also underdeveloped. Using a repetitive playing pattern, it took just ten minutes to figure out exactly how to beat the computer. It's true — BlueByte's *Game*, *Net and Match* is better, by far. ▶

DEVELOPER ⟶	Intelligent Games
PUBLISHER ⟶	Psygnosis
REQUIRED ⟶	P166, 32MB RAM, 220MB hard drive space, Knickers
IDEAL ⟶	P200, 64MB RAM, Caddy

ACCELE-RATED

This title is purely 2D so your 3D accelerator is powerless to help this game play any faster or make the transition between camera angles any smoother. Doh!

Pro 18 World Tour Golf

A little extra swing, but not much else

The difference between a good golf game and bad golf game is very small, but somehow *Pro 18* manages to slip into that tiny gap. While playable and sometimes innovative, *Pro 18* has just enough problems to keep it from competing on equal terms with the better golf titles, such as market leaders *Links LS* and *Tiger Woods*.

Pro 18's strong suit is its innovative and intuitive swing meter. As an answer to the traditional three-click mouse system, *Pro 18 World Tour Golf* adds a distinct and satisfying twist to the overall. After the third click, which determines the direction of the shot, players must hold down the button and shoot for a second mark. This represents the wrist movement that

golfers must master — the first part of a swing can be near perfect, but if the wrist movement isn't right, the shot can still be off.

The graphics are certainly passable and the three courses are exotic, even if a little bit grainy for our tastes. A more serious issue is the poor putting control, forcing players go to a completely separate screen to figure out the lie on the green. The refresh rate is also a little slow, making the presentation of each shot an annoying affair: The ball goes up into the air,

You know what all golf games need? A loud and obnoxious Rodney Dangerfield, arrogant caddies, and the occasional sex scene.

then everything pauses while the camera changes. This aggravating little scenario accompanies every single shot, tediously bogging down the gameplay.

Another flaw is the shot target. When teeing off for a long shot, you have no idea where you are aiming, and cannot retarget with a click of the mouse. This is very frustrating when you find yourself in a bad lie, with no real way to determine where your shot is headed.

Pro 18 is a basically enjoyable, but ultimately forgettable, game

that will appeal to those looking for a little more depth in their computer golf swing. However, the aforementioned problems, lack of a PGA license, lifeless sound, and other nagging details make this game an iffy proposition for *Links LS* pros. ▶

WHAT MAKES AN ATHLETE

Hardcore athletes are easy enough to spot. They spend their Saturday mornings running , they have bulges in places that God intended to be soft and jiggly, and they consider themselves a pure breed of dedicated human. However, a new breed of athlete is quietly rising to prominence. No less dedicated, no less driven and no less obsessive is this new generation of athletes who play their sports on computer. This handy guide will help you determine exactly what kind of athlete you are at the moment, and help you learn what it takes to be the kind of athlete you WANT to be.

	MR. JOE AVERAGE	**TRADITIONAL ATHLETE**	**COMPUTER ATHLETE**
Requirements	A pulse and outie genitalia	Good genes, sadistic upbringing	PII 333, Voodoo II card, 4 GB hard drive space, Microsoft Sidewinder gamepad
Typical Attire	Pants one size too small; shirt with mildly offensive slogan on back	Fluffy, colorful sweats; shirt with sweat stains around neck and pits	Sweats, two sizes too small; shirt with mildly offensive food stains around neck and pits
Daily Regimen	Work, TV, beg for sex, more TV, more begging, sleep	200 sit-ups, 150 push-ups, 3 miles running, 8 minutes of Richard Simmons workout, take steroids, beat up wife	2 hours managing sports league, 3 hours watching ESPN, 2 hours sports gaming, 6 hours surfing for naked pics of Teri Hatcher
Typical Nutrients	Four basic food groups, washed down with beer	Health food washed down with unhealthy, ineffective protein supplements which cost a fortune	The Twinkie group, the Spam group, the Mountain Dew group, the Twinkie-Spam sandwich group

The Groupies	Girls who've given up on Prince Charming	Girls who value looks over the disadvantages of a slightly gamy smell	Girls who've, uh huh huh huh...stop...huh, huh.. oh nevermind
Call to Glory	Broken garage door opener	The Olympics	Competing in any sports game with the team from Philly
Nutritional Nightmare	Special dinner made by girlfriend	The accidental placement of cheese on a dry turkey sandwich	The accidental bag of crap-tasting low-fat chips with Olestra
Career Threatening Injuries	Massive groin trauma	Torn Achilles tendon	Chronic butt-spread
Where they congregate	Car shows	Yuppie health clubs	Arby's

Links Extreme

Have you ever put a silent curse on your opponent's next shot?

How many times have you secretly wanted to drive the ball into the snooty VIP playing in front of you!

On the mystical **Mojo Bay Country Club**, you can curse your rival's shot and watch it corkscrew into a shark-infested water hazard.

At Armadillo Al's Demolition Driving Range, you can turn robotic snobs into toast with atomic golf balls.

Have you ever dreamed of giving your golf opponent a serious handicap with an exploding plasma ball? Let's be honest—we all have.

Live the dream by inviting your fiercest adversary to a game of Death Matchplay on the Dimension X Battlefield!

WWW.LINKSEXTREME.COM

ACCESS SOFTWARE INCORPORATED

STARCRAFT:
BROOD WAR

Change isn't always a good thing. For veterans of a game like *Starcraft*, initial attempts to use the fancy new *Brood War* units might be met by a heavy dose of "how the hell do I use these?" But with Blizzard's official expansion pack, change is good. The six additions (seven, if you count the Dark Archon and Dark Templar separately), definitely do have their learning curves— it takes some experience to play them the way Blizzard intended. Knowing that the Devourer is a heavy air-to-air attacker isn't enough; you have to get a feel for the way it plays, and determine whether or not it can stand up to a battlecruiser, for instance. Make no mistake, the new units are powerful enough to make learning them well worth it. You'll find that they fit very well into the existing armies of the three races. The trick is knowing how and when to use 'em. PCXL took a detailed look at the new units and came up with some interesting strategies, as well as some pretty clever combinations, incorporating the old units with the new.

The Protoss

DARK TEMPLAR

HIT POINTS / SHIELDS:
40/40

DAMAGE:
+ 3/upgrade

SPECIAL ABILITIES:
Permanent cloak, can merge with another to form Dark Archon.

COST:
125/100/2

A powerful assassin that appeared as a special (non-buildable) unit in the original Protoss campaign, the Dark Templar essentially makes the Protoss ground offensive even more dominant. If there was any doubt about which was the best, there won't be now. Although you can counteract them with detector units, against a full squad of these puppies, poorly defended

STATS

STRENGTHS:
Permanent cloak, hard-hitting, can morph to Dark Archon.

WEAKNESSES:
Fragile, slow

MOST EFFECTIVE AGAINST:
Infantry

LOOK OUT FOR:
Flying detector units, ComSat

MAD PROPS IF YOU CAN

Take out another group of Dark Templars who can't see you, take out entire enemy base with one squad

or isolated turrets will go up in flames quicker than *Jack Frost* at the box office. Because Templars do so much more damage against ground, you can't defend against them like Wraiths. Once the towers are down, they can knock out just about anything — a full Terran bunker/siege tank defense, Zerg sunkens, Zealot factory, etc. Investing in a squad to perform hit-and-run raids (slightly cheaper

than Wraiths) is a wise investment if you can afford it. But they shouldn't be the main focus of your attack, unless your opponent has somehow been negligent in placing detectors at his perimeter. Or unless you relish destroying your opponents without them ever knowing you're there.

Combos with other units:

SHUTTLES: Shuttle drops past enemy detectors into the heart of the base can be devastating. Just a few Templars can take out a whole peon line in seconds.

OBSERVERS: Make sure they aren't taken out by cloaked units!

ZEALOTS: Send in a large squad or more of Zealots as a diversion, then drop your Templars somewhere vulnerable to inflict the real damage.

REAVERS: Ace at taking out enemy detector structures, follow up a Reaver drop with a Templar drop when the turrets are down.

SCOUTS: Flying units, especially detectors, will need to be taken down in force when attacking with Templars.

As always mixing up units rather than relying on a swarm of one type will be much more effective. Here a combined force of Dark Templars and Reevers level a base.

DARK ARCHON

HIT POINTS / SHIELDS / ENERGY:
25 / 200 / 200

DAMAGE:
N/A

SPECIAL ABILITIES:
Maelstrom, Mind Control, Feedback

COST:
2 Dark Templars

Two dark Templars are expensive, but what you get is a unit that is a good complement to the regular Archon and potentially far more powerful. The Dark Archon has no regular attack of its own, but instead has three powerful spells. Maelstrom, the area effect spell, prevents all units caught within its sphere from moving or attacking. The Mind Control spell converts an enemy unit to your side, but drains all of the Archon's shields in the process – so after casting one of these, you'll want to hightail it out of there to the nearest Shield Battery. And, the Feedback spell causes a target's energy to be converted into damage points against itself – so it's basically an assassination spell against spellcasters. The versatility of these spells makes the Dark Archon a great unit to have in both offensive and defensive groups. Just make sure they've got backup at all times.

Combos with other units:

SHUTTLES: Shuttle drop into an enemy base and seize two powerful units, then jet outta there. Causes all sorts of havoc.

DRAGOONS: Having a few of these as escorts is good policy.

TEMPLARS: A few Dark Archon Hallucinations will be good for base attacks, as the Archons are likely to be high-priority targets for spells.

ARCHON: Looks cool, and can actually be effective. Hold position with the Archons to defend the Dark Archons. An EMP will really ruin your day, though.

STATS

STRENGTHS: Powerful spells, heavy shields, good range

WEAKNESSES: Slow, expensive, no melee attack

MOST EFFECTIVE AGAINST: Powerful units

MAD PROPS IF YOU CAN: Seize an entire group of attacking units, and send them right back to attack their own base

Keep in mind that Dark Archons are cloaked while they are morphing, so you could even bring a squad of cloaked Dark Templars into an enemy base. Now pop up 6 Dark Archons just to scare the shit out of them.

CORSAIR

HIT POINTS / SHIELDS / ENERGY:
80 / 100 / 200

DAMAGE:
5 +1 / upgrade

SPECIAL ABILITIES:
Disruption Web

COST:
125 / 100 / 2

This quick air-to-air unit was originally conceived to take out Mutalisks and such, but now has a spell that makes base sieges much easier – the Disruption Web. The opposite of the Defiler's Dark Swarm, the Web prevents ranged units in its trap from firing, while Melee units are unaffected. The radius of this web is small but covers turrets, tanks, and bunkers quite well. Because a fully charged Corsair can cast twice, you can blanket an enemy base with Webs and move in with ground troops – in this case, Reavers and Zealots. In combat, the Corsair is no powerhouse, but because of its rapid firing, in groups, they aren't bad at taking out other small air units. And lastly, they're quick – accelerating about as fast as Mutalisks and with a better top speed.

Combos with other units:

DARK TEMPLARS: Their cloaked attacks will add to the confusion when you hit them with Webs.

REAVERS: Webs will provide time to move into siege tank range and take them out.

SCOUTS: A group of scouts can move in quickly and take out peons when the towers are down.

In air-to-air combat Corsairs are really only good when they are grouped and upgraded.

STATS

STRENGTHS: Disruption W.b, fast attack and movement

WEAKNESSES: Does little damage on its own

MOST EFFECTIVE AGAINST: Towers, siege units, bunkers

LOOK OUT FOR: Hydras, Scourges, Templars with Psi Storm

MAD PROPS IF YOU CAN: Nullify an entire enemy defense with Disruption Webs, then destroy their base with minimal casualties

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The Terran

MEDIC

HIT POINTS / ENERGY:
60 / 200

DAMAGE:
N/A

SPECIAL ABILITIES:
Restoration, Optical Flare

COST:
54 / 25 / 1

T he very model of a support unit, the Medic is designed with the express purpose of making everything better. They heal infantry, albeit only one at a time, to make those early marine attacks much more effective. But with their Restoration spell, they can also remove any adverse status from a unit, including Lockdown, Parasite, and Irradiate. Optical Flare makes the targeted unit permanently blind, so they can only see in the immediate area around them. This spell is great for nullifying Siege Tanks and other siege units, as well as for weakening enemy spellcasters like Templars and Queens. With enough of these blindness spells cast on powerful units, Medics can turn the tables on an even battle to your favor. And they kinda look and sound like Winona Ryder, which is really the unit's biggest strength.

Medics make early marine rushes a much more appealing option to Terran players, especially when battling the Zerg. Plus the Medics have a sexy chick voice.

STATS

STRENGTHS:
Cheap, versatile, can greatly increase infantry lifespan

WEAKNESSES:
No attack

MOST EFFECTIVE AGAINST:
Siege units, spellcasters

LOOK OUT FOR:
Pretty much anything, but they usually aren't a priority target

MAD PROPS IF YOU CAN:
Render an enemy base powerless with just Medics and Optical Flare

Combos with other units:

MARINES: This one is obvious. Just have one medic for every four to six marines, and you'll be able to get more for your money. Particularly good with dropships.

SIEGE TANKS: Restoration will remove those Lockdown spells.

VALKYRIE

HIT POINTS:
250

DAMAGE:
9, rocket 4 x 1 upgrade

SPECIAL ABILITIES:
None

COST:
250 / 150 / 3

A purely air-to-air attacker, the Valkyrie spits out bursts of missiles in a short, cone-shaped area in front of it. It's really an area effect spell, but it's cumulative with other Valkyries firing at the same target. By itself, it's extremely crappy. But in a group, its damage potential rises at a sharp curve. Since it's moderately fast it's well suited as a roving air patrol — a group can make quick work of transports and massed air units. A Valkyrie squad is also a great escort for Battlecruisers, as they can bear the brunt of counterattacks from Scouts and Scourges. However, since they're really only effective in a large group, and have limited use, you may want to make sure the considerable investment will be worth it.

Combos with other units:

BATTLECRUISERS: Provide valuable air support for Yamato base attacks.

SIEGE TANKS: When cracking open tough bases, they'll be great for taking out any opportunistic air attacks on your tanks.

VULTURES: Send some out to escort your Vultures when they're laying mines.

STATS

STRENGTHS:
Great when grouped

WEAKNESSES:
Crappy by itself, no ground attack, expensive

MOST EFFECTIVE AGAINST:
Massed groups of Mutas, Wraiths, etc.

LOOK OUT FOR:
Templars, Hydras

MAD PROPS IF YOU CAN:
Cast Defensive Matrix on an entire squad and send 'em in to completely wipe out someone's air force — especially nasty when fighting Overlords

BATTLECRUISERS: Likewise, although you'll want to bring the Medics along in a dropship.

Other changes:

GOLIATH

INCREASED ANTI-AIR RANGE
COST: 150 / 150

The previously ineffective Goliath has been researched at the Machine Shop, and received an upgrade, greatly extending its anti-air range. Well suited for defense, they now prove a more dangerous foe for Zerg guardians, for example. They can shoot further than they can see, so place Sci vessels around your perimeter as spotters.

Upgrading the Valkyrie's missiles will increase their damage potential dramatically.

The Zerg

LURKER

HIT POINTS:
125

DAMAGE:
20 + 2 / upgrade

SPECIAL ABILITIES:
Attack while burrowed

COST:
125 / 125 / 3 (including cost of Hydralisk)

A www yeah ... The Zerg finally get their ground siege unit. And the idea is great, even if the effectiveness is somewhat lacking. Unlike tanks, their damage potential in small numbers isn't that great. However, if you take into consideration that they're burrowed, you can exploit weaknesses in enemy bases to your advantage – take out the detectors and you're in the clear. Lurker's range is somewhat limited as well, but on the other hand, they no longer hit friendly units with their spines. If detected, they are extremely vulnerable to the likes of tanks, and especially, air units. So no surprise to anyone who's used tanks before, you should be sneaky with them; hitting the opponent where they're weakest, slowly advancing the rear lurkers

to the front. Lurkers are good for defense as well, especially at choke points or along the pathway to an enemy base.

Combos with other units:

HYDRAS: Use a frontal assault with Hydras as a distraction as you flank 'em with a squad of Lurkers.

MUTAS: Provide air support, since the Lurkers are helpless against air.

ZERGLINGS: Will speed up base attacks considerably as well as cover a tactical retreat for the Lurkers should the need arise.

DEFILERS: Dark Swarm will protect the Lurkers from tanks, and mutate 'em into Lurkers, and get away with it

are you talking about tanks, Lurkers or Dark Swarm?Will be able to burrow within range and get a few hits in. This will also buy them time against air.

STATS

STRENGTHS:
Attack while burrowed, hits multiple enemies

WEAKNESSES:
Slow, pricey

MOST EFFECTIVE AGAINST:
Structures, infantry

LOOK OUT FOR:
Siege tanks, Sci vessels with Irradiate, air units

MAD PROPS IF YOU CAN:
Bring a squad of Hydras down into an enemy base and mutate 'em into Lurkers, and get away with it

Lurkers can provide an enormous psychological advantage.

DEVOURER

HIT POINTS:
250

DAMAGE:
25 + 2/upgrade

SPECIAL ABILITIES:
Acid Spores (automatic)

COST:
200 / 150 / 2 (including cost of Mutalisk)

Morphing a Muta into a Devourer serves as a free heal.

A heavy air-to-air unit that mutates from the Mutalisk, the Devourer is better suited as a heavy support unit rather than as a mainstay of your air force, mainly because of its extremely slow fire rate. Its corrosive acid will cover enemy units with acid spores automatically – an Ensnare-like area effect, leaving units more susceptible to damage from attacks. This effect is compounded with multiple Devourers firing on a target, so their effectiveness is greater

when grouped. One-on-one with a Cruiser, the Devourer gets smoked; but pair four Devourers on a couple of Cruisers, and one Devourer will immerge, barely injured. Working in tandem with Mutalisks and Queens, a few Devourers can put a big dent in an enemy air force.

Combos with other units:

GUARDIANS: Pretty straightforward. They can discourage reprisal attacks, or at least buy time for the Guardians to retreat.

QUEENS: Use the Ensnare spell in tandem with the Acid Spores, and they'll be hating life.

DEFILERS: Use the Plague spell on top of that, and they'll really be hating life.

MUTALISKS: Because their attack hits multiple opponents, the Devourer sets enemies up quite effectively with the Acid Spores.

ULTRALISKS: Can provide air support for an Ultra raid.

STATS

STRENGTHS:
Effective when grouped, area effect is automatic

WEAKNESSES:
No ground attack, slow fire rate

MOST EFFECTIVE AGAINST:
Large groups of enemy air

LOOK OUT FOR:
Templars, Hydras

MAD PROPS IF YOU CAN:
Never lose Mutas – you can morph 'em into Devourers

Other changes:

ULTRALISK

INCREASED ARMOR: 150 / 150
INCREASED SPEED: 200 / 200

The maligned Ultralisk has gotten a much needed credibility transfusion in the form of two powerful new upgrades, both researched at the Ultralisk Cavern. Extra-thick armor adds a big four points to their armor rating, and the speed upgrades make 'em around 50% faster. Laughingstocks of the Zerg arsenal no more! Well, maybe a little.

"Ready for your sponge bath?", "What did you do to your hair?", "look at all the pretty lights"

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TRIBES

DELICIOUS TIPS STRAIGHT FROM THE DEVELOPERS...

...AND SOME UNDERHANDED TRICKS FROM PCXL

Steal enemy ships as they are produced to be real annoying.

Scott Youngblood, game designer for *Tribes*, was kind enough to give us his secrets for winning at the game. Then the **PCXL** staff added their own batch of dirty tricks that are likely to make you the hero on any *Tribes* server. If you haven't snatched this game off the shelf, now would be a really good time. The massive multi-player battles are truly unique, and produce endless varieties of games, strategies, and results.

THE BASICS IN EACH GAME TYPE

DEFEND & DESTROY: Like the title states: Defend, *then* destroy. If everyone on your team rushes off to attack the enemy base, chances are you'll lose, because your undefended equipment will be easy to destroy. If you have a fully stocked team (8+ players) it's okay to send a few members off to hit the enemy base as quickly as possible, but make sure that your base is being defended *at all times.*

PCXL TAKE: We don't like defending much and firmly believe that your best defense is a good offense. Aggressive strikes on the enemy base will keep them on their toes and give your team the upper hand. Plus defending is boring.

CAPTURE THE FLAG: Players need to split into definite roles. Some need to play full time defense, possibly rotating with players on offense. Nothing sucks more than triumphantly grabbing the enemy flag, and then coming back to an empty base with an empty flag stand. Everyone wants to contribute to winning, which tends to be stealing the flag, but if your flag is never in the base, you can't win.

PCXL TAKE: The best method of defense is to install remote turrets all around the flag and your power generator.

That way, you don't have to worry about defending and can rush their base for the flag. Again, we really don't like defending.

FIND & RETRIEVE: Right from the beginning devote most of your team to pilfering (or stopping the enemy tribe from pilfering) as many flags as possible. If you don't have enough players to grab every flag, then guard the initial flag points until your other teammates can return to take the rest.

PCXL TAKE: Organization is key. You'll need to know exactly which flag to go for, so the whole team isn't rushing for the same flag.

CAPTURE & HOLD: At the start of the mission, grab key towers and take whatever steps necessary to keep it for the entire match. Once you've taken a tower, by all means, defend it.

PCXL TAKE: The first tower you should steal is the one closest to your opponents base. Then, while you take the rest, the tower's defense will create a nice wall. Defending the first tower is key, and there's bound to be plenty of action as the enemy tries to take it.

TRICKS FOR EVERY TYPE OF GAME

DEPLOY SENSORS: If you can see the enemy tribe coming, defending against them will be much easier. Place multiple sensors around your base in key locations.

PCXL TAKE: By spending the first part of the game setting up automated defenses, you are free to go for the glory and grab their objective without worrying about the enemy taking yours. It's a pain to set up but worth it in the end.

PLACE CAMERAS NEXT TO TURRETS: This is especially effective on turrets that act on motion sensors (indoor mini-fusion turrets). Many times an enemy tribesman will utilize a "stop & go" method to sneak past these turrets. If you place a camera on the enemy (pointing in the direction from which you suspect they may approach), they will be unable to sneak by and be forced to deal with the turret.

PCXL TAKE: Cameras make turrets much more effective. One team member should be responsible for setting up turrets, cameras, and the like. Just as long as it isn't one of us.

COORDINATE ATTACKS ON ENEMY EQUIPMENT: It is much easier to take out turrets as a team than as an individual. Use the targeting laser in combination with the mortar to destroy turrets *before* your tribe attacks the base.

PCXL TAKE: The best way to obliterate turrets is to have a psycho (or **PCXL** staffer) rush the base and take out the power generator. Then the entire squad can demolish the turrets without them firing back.

If you get this close to an enemy, switch to the chaingun. With a full jetpack, wait for an enemy to land, take off and disc them to death from above. Great combo for obliterating enemies.

USE THE LPC & HPC TO GET YOUR HEAVY ARMOR TEAMMATES INTO POSITION: An HPC loaded down with players in heavy armor can unleash a deadly force against your enemies. Light armored players can get to the enemy base quickly without taking up valuable slots in the vehicles.

PCXL TAKE: Make sure the driver of the HPC doesn't suck. We've had way too many rides on an HPC ended by stupid crashes. A skilled driver can be the difference between a well-coordinated attack and a chaotic smashup.

PLACE REMOTE TURRETS AT KEY AREAS: If a remote turret can get a few shots into an enemy tribesman, you can take him out with a single disk instead of two. If you want to survive, this really is a life-and-death matter.

PCXL TAKE: If you want to really annoy your enemy, place remote turrets at *their* base. Nothing is worse than being fired at by a turret while wandering innocently around your base. Plus, the battle to destroy this turret will often cause them to harm their own equipment.

USE THE COMMAND MAP AND WAYPOINTS TO GET ORGANIZED: An organized team will beat the crap out of an unorganized rabble. Use the command map to issue and view your tribesmates' waypoints – this will make it clear what everyone's doing. To allow for easier identification, select one player as "commander" and divide players into sub-groups. Defensive players should be in one sub-group; offensive players should be in another sub-group.

PCXL TAKE: Trying to find one leader who doesn't annoy the whole

CRASH TEST DUMMIES→

Learn how to fly before risking your teammates lives. Especially if anyone from PCXL is riding along.

tribe is a nightmare. Why not set your own waypoint and keep team members informed of your plans? This way people will know what positions are left to defend.

ALL IS FAIR IN LOVE, WAR, AND... UHH...TRIBES

These following tricks are dirty, mean-spirited, and intended to make you the ultimate nuisance to the enemy. Remember, **PCXL** didn't make the bugs, we're just telling you how to exploit them.

BE A SPY: On most servers *Tribes* allows you to switch teams at will. Use this option to learn about the enemy bases' defenses and find their flag. Quickly switch back and report the whole thing to your team. Knowledge is key to a good attack.

BE A BASTARD: If you really want to be dirty and underhanded, switch teams and destroy the entire base (especially power), then switch back to your "real" team and attack the defenseless enemy (only works if FF is on). Once players catch on,

you'll be kicked off the server. We don't encourage using this tactic, but beware of fellow team members who might.

BE A CAMPER: Camping outside a team's base is annoying, but if you can successfully get inside and find a good camping spot you can rack up kills and keep the enemy from making repairs. While some bases have better camping sites than others, this is a sure-fire killer trick in Raindance. Break through the weak defenses, take out the power, then jet to the top of the base, keeping your disc gun pointed at the entrance below.

SINGLE-PLAYER TIPS

The hardest thing in *Tribes* is joining a server full of people who already know each other. What exactly makes your teammates love you, and your enemies despise you? What follows is a list of key team components that go into winning a game. Choose one of these, do it right, and your team will want you back, game after game.

BUS DRIVER: Constantly requisition and load up HPCs and deliver them safely to their destination. Your teammates will worship you.

TURRET MAN: Never stop getting remote turrets and placing them all over your base, the battlefield, and the enemy base, if possible. When performing thankless tasks like this, be sure and tell your teammates, and try to make them feel bad for not doing it themselves.

SNIPER: Find a high spot near the enemy base and pick off foes as

they emerge from their base. It will exasperate them, and it will take the focus off the rest of your team.

TARGETER: Get the targeting laser and pair up with a heavy soldier and his mortar. You don't get the kills, but a targeter is a huge plus.
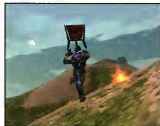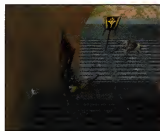
Flags. Defend yours, capture theirs. Simple, really.

LONG-RANGE BOMBER: Take the plunge. Load up in heavy armor and take out turrets from long-range. This works best with a targeter backing you up.

BE THE DISTRACTION: Go for a flag run and take one for the team. Distract the turrets and defenders while the real "flag grabber" comes from behind.

REPAIR MAN: Constantly have a repair kit and make sure all defenses are running. A bit boring for PCXL, but incredibly necessary for a great *Tribes* team.

When the red mist descends, it's time to respawn and try again.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

L ooking to do some serious online ass kicking, but not sure where to start? We're here to help, friends. Included on this month's disc is a fancy little utility called GameSpy that does all the hard work for you. Originally called QuakeSpy, and designed only for use with *Quake* and *QuakeWorld*, it's been expanded to work with nearly every multi-player action game out there, including *Half-Life*, *Sin*, *Heretic II*, *Quake II*, *Shaga*, and others.

The best part about GameSpy is that it is free, unlimited use shareware. What's all that fancy talk mean? It means that you can use the shareware version for the rest of your life, frag to your heart's content, grow old and screw your neighbor's wife, and never pay a dime. However, if you do register (for a measly $20 – support shareware!), you get support for newer games much quicker and free updates forever. Considering what you get, that's not a bad deal at all (the neighbor's wife is not included).

Firing up a new utility like GameSpy, with all its talk of ping, hops, unbound, and so on, can be quite confusing. And that's why we've whipped up this quick and easy guide. Please note that these options are based on the full, registered version of GameSpy. The shareware version may not have every option enabled.

1. SERVER NAME: The name of the server often tells you who (or what) is hosting the game.
2. PING: This is the time it takes for packets of information to go from your PC to the server and back. The lower this number, the better—

under 200 is considered acceptable and playable for *Quake II*.
3. T/O: Stands for Time Out. When pinging a server, you will send 4-5 'pings.' If any of those do not return, they time out and the number of T/Os appears in this area.

Only join servers where your T/O is 1 or lower.
4. ADDRESS: The actual IP address of the server.
5. MAP: Displays the map currently being played.
6. PLAYERS: Shows the server's

setting for maximum number of players and the number currently on the server.
7. GAME: The type of game currently being played.
8. HOPS: The number of servers you are being routed through in

PCXL cannot be held accountable for the assenine names people were using when we took this screenshot.

order to reach the game server. The lower the number the better.
9. BUDDIES: If any of your buddies (which you can preset as an option) are online.
10. TIMES PLAYED: Shows how many times you have played on that particular server.
11. PLAYER NAME: The players currently on the server.
12. FRAGS: Who is kicking ass and who is frag bait on the server.
13. CONNECT TIME: Everyone's connection speeds (ping).
14. RULES: The rules that apply on

that specific server. This could include weapons stay, no falling damage, cheats enabled, etc.
15. This menu allows you to toggle which servers you want to display. You can select your favorite servers, passed servers, or servers that are filtered out.
16. The name of the game. (*Quake*, *Shogo*, etc.) Click the box to the left to unveil all the available servers.
17. The networks where the servers are being hosted.
18. Copy server information to

clipboard then to proper locale.
19. Manually add a server using name or IP address.
20. Manually delete a server.
21. Select all sources (servers).
22. Launch game.
23. Record a demo.
24. Observe this game (you're in but you're not playing).
25. Busy server redial (keep trying the one you want to join).
26. Update from selected sources (get the latest lists from the list host of choice).
27. Update server list from all

sources available.
28. Refresh (selected server).
29. Refresh visible list.
30. Monitor server. (Watches for map changes.)
31. Find player.
32. Buddy lists.
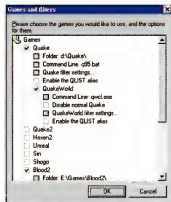**33.** Player profiles.
34. Player properties.
35. Chat.
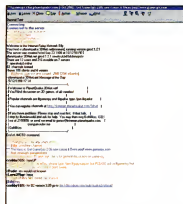**36.** Games and filters. (Add new games to GameSpy.)
37. Options.
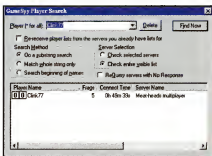**38.** Help.

BELOW THE SURFACE

Adding a new game to GameSpy is pretty simple. After installing the game, such as *Half-Life*, to your system, open up GameSpy, click on GameSpy, Games and Filters. A list of supported games will appear; click in the box to the left of the game you wish to use with GameSpy. You will then be prompted to find the location of the game's .exe, the file that actually starts the game. (eg. C:\Quake) After finding the applicable .exe, click okay. The game will then be added to GameSpy and you'll be ready to get it on.

If you're in a clan (or want to whomp-up on a clan), the buddy list is for you. Using this menu option allows you to find a group of players with a specific word or phrase in their name (such as PCXL.) To access the Buddy List, click Tools, Buddy List. When one of your 'buddies' is playing, a red dot will appear to the left of the server in the main server listing.

Everyone loves to chat after a round of ass-kicking and rub salt in those still-bleeding wounds. GameSpy features a full-blown chat utility that will have you flaming people in no time. To access the chat, click Community, GameSpy chat. A small box will appear with the available chat rooms. (It's set to chat.planetquake.com by default.) Click okay and type in your messages at the bottom once you're in the room. A list of who is currently in the chat room appears on the right.

GameSpy allows you to find friends quickly who may also be playing online. You can access the Find Player option by either pressing F4, or by clicking on Tools, Find Player.
Type in the name of the player you wish to find (the name they use online) and hit Find Now. If they are using GameSpy, their name will pop-up in the window at the bottom. To join their game, click on the name in the window and you'll be transferred to the correct server. Double-click the server to join in on the action.

PINGTOOL

GameSpy isn't the only resource available when it comes to online games. PingTool is a server browser which allows you to find and join countless servers.

Much like GameSpy, PingTool's primary function is to find servers for first-person action games, and report back information such as ping time, number of players, the map currently being played, etc. PingTool featues two modes of pinging (the time it takes for a packet of information to travel from your computer to the server and back): (1) Scanning, which pings a large number of servers, and (2) timed, which scans a smaller number of servers for more accurate results. PingTool can also provide current ping, last ping, average ping, and number of time-outs, all vital info when looking for a good online game.

And, PingTool is customizable, allowing you to set up a number of filters, from rearranging display windows, to setting up preferences. To try PingTool, head over to www.pingtool.com and tell 'em PCXL sent ya.

ONLINE ARENA

THE OTHER ONLINE GAMES

T he past few months have seen an explosion of quality first-person games, but the question is, will any of them enjoy the long-term support lavished on *Quake II* and planned for *Half-Life*? Several games are teetering on the edge of making it big while at the same time facing the possibility of disappearing altogether. With the limited number of people dedicated to making quality levels and mods (and the looming release of *Quake III: Arena*), are there enough amateur mod-makers out there with the time and inclination to support these games to the fullest? Which of these second-tier titles will make in impact in the coming year? PCXL takes a look:

SIN

DEVELOPER: Ritual Entertainment
PUBLISHER: Activision
RELEASE DATE: November 1998
STRENGTH OF COMMUNITY: Solid

BEST NEWS SITE: There are a number of solid news sites out there, but www.ritualistic.com is the best source for all of the news that matters.
BEST MOD SITE···▸ Since the editing tools have only recently been released, there are no rock-solid mod sites out there, but www.ritualistic.com will probably end up being the best.
BEST MOD UTILITY···▸ Many members of the *Sin* community use PingTool (www.pingtool.com) to locate game servers. As of this writing, we were unable to find any announced mods or TCs.
**BEST PLACE TO FIND GAMES···▸** GameSpy has support for *Sin*, as does PingTool, which supports the demo and the full version.
BEST WAY TO SET YOURSELF APART···▸ Since it uses the *Quake*

II engine, people are already pretty well versed with creating skins and models. Some revealing skins for villainess Elexis have already started to appear, and more are on the way.
BEST NEW MAP···▸ A handful of maps have been released, but none of them are too spectacular. As people familiarize themselves with Sin's editing abilities, look for quality maps to start popping up.
CHANCES FOR FUTURE COMMUNITY···▸ Besides *Half-Life*, *Sin* probably has the best chance of developing a large community. The bugs in the single-player game were quickly addressed and the multiplayer game is very solid. (Gamers also appreciated the fact that Activision sent out a free CD with the patch to anyone who asked.) Like all the other games listed here, however, *Sin* must compete against *Half-Life* for mod and level creators. *Sin* enjoyed quite a buzz in its early days, riding on the back of the *Quake II* success and the big developer names behind it. That momentum lost steam as *Half-Life* took over
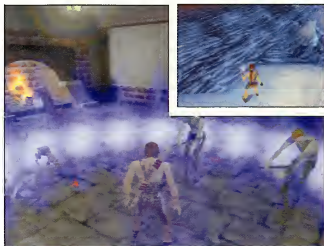
Tomb Raider levels for *Heretic II* are a natural fit.

Here is a good idea for a *Sin* skin: Denise Richards, va va voom.

and *Sin* itself was delayed, but the familiarity of the hardcore community with the *Quake II*-related editing tools should see it continuously supported for quite a while.
ODDS OF BEING A BREAKOUT GAME IN THE COMING YEAR···▸ The odds are decent for *Sin's* continued success. Ritual is an old favorite with the online community, and there is a mission pack in the works that should help build interest in the game. Ritual will need to stay active in the community—possibly release some additional DM maps—and not let their game be completely overshadowed by the juggernaut that is *Half-Life*.

HERETIC II

DEVELOPER: Raven Software
PUBLISHER: Activision
RELEASE DATE: November 1998
STRENGTH OF COMMUNITY: Small but dedicated

BEST NEWS SITE···▸ Without a doubt, www.hereticii.com is the place to go for the latest news and other goodies regarding *Heretic II*.
BEST MOD SITE···▸ Head on over to www.hereticii.com; click on Hosted Sites to access the mods

and TCs.
BEST MOD UTILITY···▸ The game is too new to really enjoy a library of mods, but many players use GameSpy to locate game servers. It will be interesting to see what sort of mods (if any) are released.
BEST PLACE TO FIND GAMES···▸ GameSpy is a great source for finding servers, but http://www.gameaholic.com/servers/heretic2/hereticii-servers.html also has a nice list of servers that show how many people are playing, which map is running, and what your ping will probably be on that server.
BEST WAY TO SET YOURSELF APART···▸ There were no skins or models available at the time this was being written, so you'd better be good if you want anyone to remember you.
BEST NEW MAP···▸ Raven has released a new set of maps, and there are some decent user-created maps available at www.hereticii.com.
CHANCES FOR FUTURE COMMUNITY···▸ Right now the community behind *Heretic II* is small but committed. There is a positive buzz surrounding the game's multiplayer aspect, and if

more people take the time to check it out, the community behind the game will flourish. The primary factor working against *Heretic II* is that it was released alongside some heavy-hitters, and games like *Half-Life* and *Sin* are dominating what gamers are playing and supporting. If *Heretic II* can maintain a community until people "discover" it, it has a shot.

ODDS OF BEING A BREAKOUT GAME IN THE COMING YEAR···> *Heretic II*'s controversial third-person perspective (**PCXL** still can't quite come to grips with this view in action games) could also be one of its strongest assets. It may turn off traditional action gamers, but people who have grown tired of the same old deathmatching style, and those who are more familiar with third-person adventure games and crave a little more action, will find it refreshing. *Heretic II* has to fight off the stigma of the *Hexen* series, which never really caught on with the larger gaming community. Unfortunately, this game will likely be dumped like an aging wife for the next hot young thing.

SHOGO

DEVELOPER:
Monolith Productions
PUBLISHER:
Monolith Productions
RELEASE DATE: October 1998
STRENGTH OF COMMUNITY:
Small to medium

BEST NEWS SITE···> A member of

Bleeding like a stuck pig is just one of many *Shogo* enhancements.

the rock-solid PlanetQuake network, www.planetshogo.com pretty much has a stranglehold on anything related to *Shogo*.
BEST MOD SITE···> See above. If you want info on mods, www.planetshogo.com is the place to be.
BEST MOD UTILITY···> The first of several planned CTF mods, Stones and Stones CTF, has been released, and there are a couple other cool mods out there, like Squeaky Toy Mod, and the entertaining Squishie vs. Mecha.
BEST PLACE TO FIND GAMES···> GameSpy is a great place to find servers, and Microsoft's Gaming Zone (http://zone.msn.com) has recently added support for *Shogo*, so look for games there, too. You can also use PingTool to find a variety of games.
BEST WAY TO SET YOURSELF APART···> No real significant skins or models have appeared on the scene yet. Once mods start appearing, however, look for that to change (giant, nude robots would be interesting, no?).
BEST NEW MAP···> The editor was only recently released, so no killer maps have appeared yet. Once people figure out the editor, however, there should be a nice stream of new levels. For current levels information, be sure to keep an eye on www.planetshogo.com.
CHANCES FOR FUTURE COMMUNITY···> Monolith is popular with the online gaming community because they're accessible, and they keep everyone posted on upcoming releases, new developments, and release patches. The

recent multiplayer patch really improved *Shogo*'s gameplay, and it came fast enough to prevent the game's support from eroding. With both human and MCA playing capabilities, and the ability to interchange various parts of any LithTech Engine game (i.e., bring MCAs into the world of *Blood II*), *Shogo* should enjoy a long and healthy life.
ODDS OF BEING A BREAKOUT GAME IN THE COMING YEAR···> *Shogo* could be the big surprise of the year. Gamers really dig it, its supporters are very vocal, and the entire anime element helps separate it from the herd. A multiplayer demo was recently released for people who haven't tried the game yet, and the community appears to be committed to creating quality mods and levels. If it can keep that support, the future for *Shogo* is looking pretty good.

UNREAL

DEVELOPER: Epic MegaGames
PUBLISHER: GT Interactive
RELEASE DATE: May 1998
STRENGTH OF COMMUNITY:
On life-support

BEST NEWS SITE···> A few of the *Unreal* news sites have already closed down, but www.planetunreal.com still provides good updates regarding patches, new mods, and levels.
BEST MOD SITE···> Your one-stop shopping ground is definitely www.planetunreal.com. Just follow the links to the left of the page to access information regarding mods.
BEST MOD UTILITY···> There are a couple of servers up and running for a mod called jihad (where two teams fight for the control of a holy temple), but for the most part, *Unreal* mods have not yet been released or are in the "alpha stage" and not quite ready for primetime. One of the best-looking upcoming mods is Force Recon, which will simulate ground combat in the way that the Jane's games simulate air combat. Hopefully they'll finish Force Recon.
BEST PLACE TO FIND GAMES···> Finding servers for *Unreal* can be a challenge. Once people learned of the game's buggy multiplay, they redirected their server resources to other games. You can find games using GameSpy and PingTool, with servers also listed at

Extremely cool user created levels, like this one, are already available for *Unreal*.

http://www.planetunreal.com/index.asp?servers/
BEST WAY TO SET YOURSELF APART···> It's all about skins, baby. The best place to find them is www.planetunreal.com/ouseofstyle or try unreal.freshmeat.org.
BEST NEW MAP···> There haven't been any decent new maps for awhile, but some good ones include BOX, The Observatory, and The Darkish Zone. Let us not forget about the award-winning Shooting Gallery and unfathomable Cone Of Tragedy. Check the disc for more.
CHANCES FOR FUTURE COMMUNITY···> *Unreal* is on life-support and the plug could be pulled at any time. Epic really screwed the pooch when they failed to release a multiplayer patch in a timely fashion, and they still haven't released the retail version of *UnrealED*, which was promised last summer. With the release of games like *Half-Life* and *Sin*, amateur level editors/designers are abandoning *Unreal* and moving on to the newer games that people are actually playing.

Recent patches have brought a few people back to the game, but its only hope is if *Unreal Tournament* kicks complete and utter ass, and gamers and level editors return before it's too late. Barring that, the *Unreal* community will be gone.
ODDS OF BEING A BREAKOUT GAME IN THE COMING YEAR···> *Unreal* had its chance to be the king and failed horribly. *Unreal Tournament* will fail to make an impact because there is too much bad blood between the online community and Epic. Not to mention that it's going up against *Quake III: Arena*. In terms of credibility, everyone will trust Id over Epic to release a multiplayer game that works. The *Unreal* engine will live on, but the game itself will soon be forgotten.

Have You Become Niche?

With games like *Deer Hunter* and *Barbie Fashion Designer* topping the charts, is hardcore game development going to die?

I f you're anything like the editors of **PCXL**, then you enjoy the best and flashiest action games on the market. These cutting edge games have long pushed the industry forward in both technology and sales, but in the last year that has drastically changed. The sales charts (from software sales charters PC Data and SoftTrends) show a fundamental shift in the way that Americans buy games.

The entertainment software sales charts for the latter quarter of 1998 showed how strong this new movement is. *Deer Hunter* dominated throughout the year and its sequel looks even stronger. These hunting games could easily be dismissed as a fad, if the rest of the market was following tradition, but it's not. Games with the name *Barbie*, *Lego* and *Tonka* are selling phenomenally well, leaving little or no room on top for good games.

The key issue is that these 'mainstream' titles are developed for a fraction of the cost of a cutting edge game. It's only a matter of time before executives start thinking seriously about focusing more on bland mass-market

THE PAINFUL TRUTH

On this December 6-12/98 sales chart only one traditional action game here made the top ten (Frogger doesn't count because it really sucks), and this is by far the biggest time of the year for sales. Not too promising, is it?

1. Barbie Riding Club
2. Deer Hunter II 3-D
3. Microsoft Flight Simulator
4. Barbie Photo Designer w/Digital Camera
5. Barbie Nail Designer
6. Half-Life
7. Lego Island
8. Wheel of Fortune
9. Microsoft Combat Flight Simulator
10. Frogger

Deer Hunter – yuk!

games and less on the innovative titles that drive this industry.

One source (at a well known developer, who refused to be named) commented that they had gone through some difficult publisher/developer relations during the protracted development of their game. The cause? Names and franchises are selling, and it seems not to matter what the quality is like. Price point and marketing are selling these games, not critical praise and success. It's a disturbing trend.

Ed Lempel, project director at the NPD Group, believes this is not the end of traditional games, but it is a massive shift, saying, "Traditional games are not being wiped out in sales, but they now must share the market with mass market titles."

Behind the shift in the focus of game makers is a ready and willing mass audience. Throughout 1998, only five of the top ten game software programs were games that we would play. The rest were lifeless cash-ins on popular (shudder) "edutainment" franchises. Retail chains such as Wal-Mart are mostly to blame, artificially creating mass-market criterion. People respond, buying the games on familiar names and concept alone. The result is soulless crap, blowing a perfect opportunity to evangelize to new gamers how powerful, imaginative, and truly entertaining their PC games can be.

A representative from a well-respected publisher had this to say, "*Deer Hunter* woke up people in this business to new opportunities. Those games are thrown out on the cheap, are quick to turn around, and fulfill requirements that many of these 'cutting edge' games in development miss — namely timeliness, cost, and mass-market appeal."

Both Blizzard and id Software are guaranteed to have massive hits with their upcoming titles *Diablo 2* and *Quake III Arena*, but the real test will be in how well the other high-profile games sell.

FANTASY FRAG

ROBIN WILLIAMS

WHY WE HATE HIM We've now seen the exact same Robin Williams movie for the 800th time. Maybe you remember it. It's the one where he plays a quirky individual who uses humor to teach us all a valuable lesson about life. It's also the movie where the stoic people in charge don't understand his unconventional ways and try and keep him down. But they can't, because the power of the human spirit is too great. Pardon us while we hurl.

HOW HE SHOULD BE FRAGGED Robin Williams should be tied to a chair and forced to watch every movie that he has starred in over the last ten years (or one of them, over and over. It doesn't make a difference). He should watch the films until he too wants to pluck out his own eyes rather than sit through another of these atrocious diatribes. Then maybe he'll take one holiday season off and spare us the agony of watching another Robin Williams film.

Every weekday on our website we frag whatever th.. heck makes us angry, and occasionally we frag something just because it needs it. Find out what we fragged today on www.pcxl.com. You'll come for the frags, but you'll stay for the CRAZY NEWS AND BABES.

THE POWER METER

This month, these developers get kudos for their hard work, pushing cash cow publishers down the pile. As evidenced by the top two, money still rules ...

THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH	
1	**2**	**SIERRA** Tribes shipped, life is good. Half-Life's not half bad either. And then there's KQ: MOE, Quest for Glory V, Viper Racing, NFL Football Pro 99, et al.
2	**1**	**MICROSOFT** Loads of products, and now they've acquired FASA Interactive. This rolling stone is gathering increasing momentum.
3	**-**	**LOOKING GLASS STUDIOS** Hats off to this long-forgotten developer of Thief. Things are looking up with System Shock 2 in the pipeline. Hope the critical acclaim works better than it did for Terra Nova.
4	**3**	**VALVE** Half-Life gives them the status of 'developer of the year' and Team Fortress 2 is looming (but not until June – boo!).
5	**-**	**DYNAMIX** Tribes is great. Starsiege is looking pretty good too. We forgive them for Red Baron 2.
6	**9**	**MONOLITH** No new games this month, but they signed the promising RPGs Septerra Core and Metropolis' Odium. We'll just forget the announcement of Rage of Mages 2.
7	**4**	**GT INTERACTIVE** Unreal Tournament and Duke Nukem Forever loom, but disappointing Dark Vengeance and constant delays keep them at #7.
8	**8**	**3DFX** Voodoo 3, of course, plus the purchase of STB gives them a route direct to consumers.
9	**-**	**BLIZZARD** Brood War straight in the sales chart at number 4 and Diablo II is looming.
10	**7**	**HASBRO** Destined to become the company you love to hate for being successful with the likes of Frogger.

OTHER CONTENDERS
ATI 32-bit color looks quite good, and it's got the TNT scooshed in this area. But, it runs hot enough to free-base coke.
EPIC Unreal Tournament announced, gee does this sounds a bit like Quake III: Arena to anyone else out there?
ACTIVISION Sin is, at best, underwhelming, Heretic II is hardly tearing up the charts, Id2's been delayed, HG II looks pretty spotty at best.

NOWHERE IN SIGHT

THE WOMEN WE LOVE TO PLAY

SARAH KERRIGAN

Okay, maybe she's not all human now, but if you've ever played through *StarCraft* you know that the Brood Queen was once Lieutenant Sarah Kerrigan, the self-styled Queen of Blades (no relation to bitchy, horse-faced, Disney-bashing Nancy Kerrigan, the former queen of the ice skate blades).

During the course of the storyline Sarah was betrayed by her own kind, infected by the Zerg, and forced to wear skimpy leather outfits for no apparent reason. But, Kerrigan ended up with the last laugh — even if it was as a green-skinned alien goddess, the leader of the Zerg and the motivating force behind Blizzard's *StarCraft* expansion set, *Brood War*.

Frankly, if all alien women look this good, we say bring on the invasion. Being the Queen's slave can't be all that bad, can it?

OTHER ALIEN QUEENS WE'D GLADLY SERVE

JERI RYAN
ALIEN NAME—> Seven of Nine
SPECIES TRAITS—> Skin-tight outfits, legs all the way to her upper thorax, and a hard-edged view of life

MILLA JOVOVICH
ALIEN NAME—> Leeloo
SPECIES TRAITS—>: Clothing designed by Band-Aid, bright orange hair, and the ability to fight using Alien-FU-Gymkata

NATASHA HENSTRIDGE
ALIEN NAME—> Sil
SPECIES TRAITS—> The need to run around in the nude, have wild, steamy sex, and then slay her lover

BJORK
ALIEN NAME—> Bjork
SPECIES TRAITS—>: Pixie-like appearance, unintelligible communication noises, and the habit of dancing around like a six year-old hopped-up on Cocoa Pebbles

GAMESCAN

Much like convincing evidence at a criminal trial, games tend to vanish into thin air. PCXL has gone the extra mile to find out what happened.

PREY
Developer—> 3D Realms
Publisher—> GT Interactive
Original Release Date—> Fall '98
New Release Date—> Likely 2000
The Game—> You play an American Indian named Talon Brave, battling against three alien species, hoping to prove you can kick more butt than Turok. Considered by many to be the best looking game engines in development. Recently the entire development team left, or started working on Duke instead. 3D Realms does plan on releasing the game, but not until it is done.
Where are they now?—> Development seems to have stalled but may not be dead yet. Talon Brave was last seen doing a guest bit on "Love Boat: The Next Wave," as Betty White's love interest.

DAIKATANA
Developer—> Ion Storm
Publisher—> Eidos Interactive
Original Release Date—> Christmas '97
New Release Date—> Scheduled to be delayed
The Game—> John Romero's magnum opus of fragging. Set history straight in this little ditty about the search for a magical japanese sword. Check out a full preview on pg. 68 for the latest developments.
Where are they now?—> A mass exodus from Ion Storm has ensured a very late release. Meanwhile, stars Hiro Miyamoto and Mikoko Ebihara have both recently appeared on "Martial Law" as punching bags.

GAMESCAN

STAR TREK: THE SECRET OF VULCAN FURY

Developer--> Interplay
Publisher--> Interplay
Original Release Date--> Fall '97

New Release Date--> On hiatus (read: canned)

The Game--> A new Classic Trek adventure game starring the voices of the original actors. Honestly this game looked pretty damn boring to begin with, so its impending doom is likely a blessing. Now Activision has picked up the lucrative *Star Trek* license, and if the disturbing tradition holds true then they will likely pump out a series of crap games that are even more boring than the scenes in *Star Trek: Voyager* without Jeri Ryan.

Where are they now?--> Half the cast can be seen hosting repeats of "Star Trek" on the SciFi Channel, while the other half recently guest-starred on "Diagnosis Murder." (We're not making this up.)

WARCRAFT ADVENTURES: LORD OF THE CLANS

Developer--> Blizzard
Publisher--> Blizzard
Original Release Date--> Spring '98

New Release Date--> Dead as a doornail

The Game--> Continues the *Warcraft* story as a fantasy adventure game. Everyone should have seen this one coming. Blizzard never, ever, makes more than one game a year and *Diablo II* seems to be a much better choice.

Where are they now?--> The Orcs went on to star as Monster #2 in "Xena: The Warrior Princess." The Humans retired to a beachfront bungalow in Miami, where they now live next door to Sylvester Stallone and Madonna.

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THE BIGGEST UPS AND DOWN OF THE YEAR

The Heat-O-Meter

THE 1998 WRAP-UP

WHAT'S HOT

RIVA TNT--> Explosive new TNT board has done what many thought wasn't possible — it beat 3Dfx at its own game ... at least until the Voodoo 3 hits stores.

TOMB RAIDER III SALES --> Same exact game, same exact result: Massive sales. Just goes to prove that gamers can't get enough of Lara's ... uh, adventures.

MERGER MANIA--> EA buys Westwood, Eidos gets Crystal Dynamics, Havas picks up Cendant Software, and GT buys every small development house with at least three breathing employees. Ion Storm reportedly feels very well.

MASS-MARKET APPEAL--> Deer hunting games, Barbie fashion designers, and poorly-done classic game recreations topped the charts for the entire year. Maybe John Carmack should close up shop and start making Monopoly conversions or even worse, Mac games – doh!.

BLIZZARD--> Anyone still angry they had to wait a few extra months for *StarCraft*? We didn't think so.

TEAM PLAY--> New games bring teamplay deathmatch to the masses, and they responded. Traditional deathmatch is dead!!! So why hasn't anyone deleted *Quake* from their hard drives yet?

WHAT'S COLD

THE UNREAL REVOLUTION--> Despite its jaw dropping graphics and user-friendly editing tools, network play problems kept Epic's "mega game" from making *Quake II* obsolete, reminding us once again that the only game that can truly beat an Id shooter is the next Id shooter.

ION STORM--> Hello? Hello? It's me, John Romero. Is anyone else here? Anyone?

TRIAL LAWYERS--> The lawsuit that six disgruntled Ultima Online players filed against Origin has been settled, and as a concession, $15,000 has been donated to the San Jose Tech Museum. The Museum is now looking for people who've played *Trespasser* and *NAM*.

ON TIME GAMES--> More games than ever before slipped well past their original deadlines. Making the once-funny "when it's done" statement the standard in the PC gaming industry.

INTERPLAY--> *Fallout 2*, *Descent 3*, and the killing of expensive potential flops will help in 1999. But for right now they just have to be glad that 1998 is over.

DIGITAL DEER--> It's been a bad year for the furry forest-dwellers. Every company wanting to cash in has slaughtered thousands in the race *for Deer Hunter*-like success.

<<GAMER'S HOROSCOPE>>

BY GIA DECARLO

/PISCES//

A new addition to PCXL, Gia Decarlo will take a prophetic look at each month and tell you what the stars have to say about games – we're not really sure what else she does.

With the moon rising on *Doikotowa*, your inner house will be occupied by delays; delays that eventually are ended and delays which are, well, delayed. Expect the unexpected as *C&C Tiberion Sun* is rising in your RTS house. *Team Fortress 2* is in a lunar cycle, which spells the inevitable delays also suffered by its host, *Half-Life*. When it's finished, gamers will truly know how captivating multi-player can be. *Tribes* will be a huge hit with staffers and the hardcore, but its team-play will prove to be too advanced for the main-stream to catch on. The holiday titles will finally start to tire, but a powerful triumvirate (*Voodoo 3*, *E3*, and *Quake III*) will keep the year on track.

ADVICE--> Bargain bins will overflow with the less-fortunate holiday titles. Refer to our trusty reviews (complete guide page 34) to pick up some stellar games at low cost, while avoiding anything with the word "deer" on it.

GAMES (THAT SHOULD BE) IN YOUR HOUSE--> *C&C Tiberion Sun*, *Aliens versus Predator*, *Tribes*, *Teen Digital Diva* (ed note: OK, who let the chick write about games?)

Grand Idea: Tiberian Sun in every home!

INSIDE THE GAMER'S BRAIN

PCXL scientists discovered what really goes on inside of a gamers head.

REDLINE

Developer–> Beyond Games
Publisher–> Accolade
Original Release Date–> Christmas '97
New Release Date–> Spring '99

The Game–> *Redline* is a futuristic gang sim that lets you jack cars and pop rival gang leaders. The once groundbreaking engine still looks sharp, but the delay is likely to cost this game severely. Released a year ago this would have been the *Unreal* engine of the moment, but now *I-82* and Loose Cannons have the same concept, similar technology, and will be available at the same time.

Where are they now?–> Recently out of Betty Ford, the homeboys are whacking each other like crazy in the released demo.

C&C 2: TIBERIAN SUN

Developer–> Westwood Studios
Publisher–> Westwood Studios
Original Release Date–> Fall '98
New Release Date–> March '99

The Game–> The GDI and NOD return, 20 years after the original *C&C* for more RTS mayhem. Interactive backgrounds, major graphical upgrades, and 3D terrain highlight what promises to be one of the biggest selling games in any year Westwood decides to release it. Last we heard '99 is the year.

Where are they now?–> Both organizations can be seen in the upcoming TNT original movie, "Territorial Dispute," staring Frank Stallone and Tanya Roberts. Of course the game is nearing final beta, and is quite easily the most anticipated realtime strategy game this year. *PCXL* staffers have been playing mass amounts of *Red Alert* just to get ready for this. Our guess is that this will be well worth the wait.

⇢ 114 thoughts about how to install a video card

⇢ 114 thoughts about how to install a sound card

⇢ 114 thoughts trying to figure out why your sound card won't work with your video card

⇢ 232 thoughts figuring out how to frag the idiot at the top of your local *Quake* server

⇢ 176 thoughts wondering if any Ion Storm games will ever come out

⇢ 12 thoughts figuring out exactly why your DVD-ROM drive won't work as a beer holder

⇢ 144 thoughts figuring out the best possible rocket jump

⇢ 325 thoughts deciding which game to delete in order to install the next hard drive hog

⇢ 687 thoughts pondering the feasibility of dating Meg Ryan
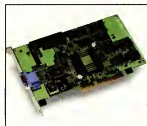
Why won't this thing work?

⇢ 784 thoughts pondering the feasibility of dating Denise Richards

⇢ 2,323 thoughts pondering the feasibility of dating the girls of the Pac Ten Conference

⇢ 1 really scary thought pondering the feasibility of dating Margaret Thatcher

⇢ 2,324 thoughts determining the best website for pics of Meg Ryan, Denise Richards, and the Pac Ten girls

⇢ 0 thoughts determining the best website for naked pictures of Margaret Thatcher

⇢ 1,967 thoughts anticipating *Quake III: Arena*

⇢ 1,833 thoughts anticipating *C&C Tiberian Sun*

⇢ 11 thoughts anticipating *Deer Hunter III*

⇢ 23 thoughts creating the ultimate tank rush

⇢ 46 thoughts creating a

Would she or wouldn't she?

What happened to Blossom?

defense against the ultimate tank rush

⇢ 1,422 thoughts creating ways to string swear words together when your computer crashes, again

⇢ 1,113 thoughts thinking of things to do while you download a 24MB demo

⇢ 4 thoughts pondering whatever happened to that girl from Blossom

⇢ 229 thoughts deciding which sounds more nutritious: Pop Tarts or corn dogs

⇢ 167 thoughts deciding whether or not a Pop Tart and corn dog sandwich is feasible

⇢ 2,224 thoughts venting your anger at Bill Gates

⇢ 2,224 thoughts venting your anger at Bill Gates' mother

⇢ 644 thoughts telling yourself this is the last deathmatch

⇢ 622 thoughts coming up with excuses for one more match

STARSHIP TROOPERS

Developer—> Microprose
Publisher—> Microprose
Original Release Date—> Spring '98
New Release Date—> Good question
The Game—> Based on the book and movie of the same name, you attempt to kill hordes of huge, nasty bugs before they rip you into little pieces. The game looked very promising with a hefty 3D engine and some great visuals. However since Hasbro bought Microprose little has been said about this game with the ageing license. Almost everyone PCXL has talked to said this game will never see the light of day, but no official announcement has been made.
Where are they now?—> We don't know about the rest of the cast, but Denise Richards can frequently be seen in PCXL's Babe-O-Rama at www.pcxl.com.

MESSIAH

Developer—> Shiny
Publisher—> Interplay
Original Release Date—> Christmas '97 (haha)
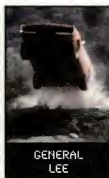**New Release Date—>** Mid 1999
The Game—> You play Bob, a tough little cherub who smites sinners in his quest to take down the cloven-hoofed badboy himself, Satan. Industry quotemeister, Dave Perry, has actually been pretty quiet as of late (biggest shock of '98 if you ask us). The game will definitely come out, and judging from past history (MDK, Earthworm Jim)it will be of high quality. However the much-hyped RT-DAT engine is already looking a bit old.
Where are they now?—> Bob's whereabouts are unknown but the current messiah can be found in his home page, http://members.aol.com/Jesus316/. Satan is regularly featured on the FOX network.

FantasyGeneral

Our recent reawakening to the classic realtime strategy game, *Red Alert*, has us waiting with baited breath for *C&C 2*. Since we can't play the game, we decided to pit historical military figures in a fantasy game. The results may be shocking, but most certainly aren't relevant to anything at all.

	ADOLF HITLER	NORMAN SCHWARZKOFF	GENERAL LEE	HANNIBAL SMITH
NICKNAME	Little Dictator (or Dolph to his friends)	Stormin' Norman	General Lee	Face ... no ... BA ... no ... Murdock ... oh hell, we don't remember
PLAYING STYLE	Look for Poland, conquer	Sit in air-conditioned office pressing fire buttons	Race around battlefield jumping over giant chasms	Wait until bad guys lock him up in a shed and then escape to foil their plans
FAVORITE VEHICLE	Mobile Gas Chamber	Patriot missile	'69 Dodge Charger	Tooled-up black van
MOST GLORIOUS BATTLE	Destroying non-threatening countries like Poland and France	Destroying non-threatening, oil-producing countries with guided missiles and propaganda	Flying over a big ditch and through a cargo train	Hypnotizing Mr. T to get him on a jumbo jet
SLOGANS	"Sieg Heil"	"This will make a great book"	"Vroom"	"I love it when a plan comes together"

BATTLE SIMULATION—> Hitler will build a massive army of tanks and immediately split his forces to attack General Lee and Colonel Hannibal Smith. The tanks will pursue General Lee until it jumps over a large chasm and all of Hitler's tanks end up stuck deep in the mud.

On the other front, Hitler will manage to capture Colonel Hannibal Smith and lock his forces in a gas chamber — big mistake. Inside, the A-Team will assemble a marauding vehicle of destruction out of loose pipes, spare parts, and electrical wire, then bust out of the trap just in time to blow up all of Hitler's units. The drivers will all live but mysteriously surrender, taking the Little Dictator out of the running completely.

Schwarzkoff will continue sitting at a desk pressing buttons and doing interviews while he takes out the A-Team, but the General Lee will emerge victorious when Boss Hogg lends Schwarzkoff a hand in the final battle. It all goes to prove that absolutely nothing is better than Detroit-made cars in the 60's, not even diminutive dictators and publicity-seeking generals.

THE PCXL HARD DRIVE


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Exploring - games
File  Edit  View  Go  Favorites  Tools  Help
Back   Forward   Up   Cut   Copy   Paste   Undo   Delete   Properties   Views
Address  C:\WINDOWS\DESKTOP\Micron (C)\games

All Folders                          x    Name                              Size  Type
Micron (C)                                660 MB space (used to be-Sin)           File Folder       1/7/99 11:42 PM
  100 Nightime transcripts                 Bill Bixby's Operation                 File Folder       1/7/99 11:42 PM
  beer pix                                 BroodWar                               File Folder       1/7/99 11:42 PM
    Anchor Steam                           Buggy-Alpha Build                      File Folder       1/7/99 11:42 PM
    Budweiser                              Buggy-Beta Build                       File Folder       1/7/99 11:42 PM
    Sam Adams                              Buggy Final Game                       File Folder       1/7/99 11:50 PM
  Conspiracies                             Carmageddon 2                          File Folder
    Hoffa's gravesite                      Cool Acronym for Crappy Game           File Folder
    Strawberry Pez                         Craptacular!                           File Folder
    Who shot J.F.K.                        Extreme Craptacular!                   File Folder
    Who shot J.R.                          Extreme Snowboarding                   File Folder
  games                                    Extreme Sucktitude                     File Folder
  naked                                    Forgotten Game                         File Folder
    Bebe-o-Rama                            Freecell                               File Folder
    Barbara Bush                           FreeCell 2000                          File Folder
    Bea Arthur                             FreeCell 2000 Extreme                  File Folder
    Dr. Laura                              Half-Life                              File Folder
    Personal collection                    Hunter Hunter                          File Folder
  Nakader                                  Just Played Once                       File Folder
    wow                                    Myth II                                File Folder
    oh, my!                                NFS 3                                  File Folder
    Yawsers!                               Obsolete Game                          File Folder
    Online chat transcripts                On the verge of deletion               File Folder
  Screenshots                              Post-Apocalyptic Future                File Folder
    3 billion Unreal snaps                 Pre-Alpha Build                        File Folder
    4 billion Half-Life snaps              Pre-Pre-Alpha Build                    File Folder
    Best ones before 10-97                 Pretty much an empty folder            File Folder
    Lara on all fours                      Quake II                               File Folder
    Quake II Fakes                         Rainbow Seven Alpha                    File Folder
    Stolen from PC Gamer                   Rainbow Six                            File Folder
    Wow, these are old                     Schoolyard Slaughter                   File Folder
  Simpson quotes                           Shogo                                  File Folder
  skins                                    Sierra Driving School                  File Folder
    Barbara Bush                           Sierra Drunk Driving School            File Folder
    Chris Anderson                         Some Shareware Game                    File Folder
    Dr. Laura                              Sucktitude '99                         File Folder
  Windows shizit                           Tribes                                 File Folder       1/7/99 11:42 PM
    MS Office stuff that no one uses       What the hell is this crap             File Folder       1/7/99 11:42 PM
    Word                                   When did I install this                File Folder       1/7/99 11:42 PM
    Word to your mother                    Why is this game still on              File Folder       1/7/99 11:42 PM

My Computer
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HARD CHOICE

The PCXL Hard Drive is a prime example of what a hardcore gamers machine should look like. The lesson to be learned here is that with only 4 gigabytes of space the hardcore have to be picky about what they keep. There just isn't room for *Unreal, Quake II, Half-Life, Sin, Shogo, Need For Speed III, Rainbow Six, Tribes, StarCraft,* and porn. We chose to dump *Unreal, Sin,* and Dr. Laura pics.

The Next to go?

The PCXL Hard Drive was taken from the desktop of Ed Lee our dedicated Assistant Editor. Since this is the first month where no staffers left the magazine (in fact, three more joined) we have predicted which staffer was leaving next. Since he is happy with his job the only way he will leave is by death. The following ends would be the most ironic for Ed:

---> Actually showing up on time and getting killed during a 9AM earthquake.
---> Catching rickets from our ex-editor, Rupee the Ricket-Infected Spider Monkey.
---> Getting caught in bed with Marcus Alien, by a drunk OJ Simpson.

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

Developer--> 3D Realms
Publisher--> GT Interactive
Original Release Date--> Fall '98
New Release Date--> When it's done

The Game--> Well, duh. More Duke, chicks, and attitude. The games' major delay was caused when 3D Realms switched over to the *Unreal* engine and little has been heard since. Therefore, every magazine and website in the industry has been using the same three crappy screenshots (see example above) for the last 6 months. It will come out, and it will kick ass.

Where are they now?--> Duke Nukem has been keeping himself busy doing guest shots on Pamela Lee Anderson's new show, "VIP." He's the one not getting wet.

INTERSTATE '82

Developer--> Activision
Publisher--> Activision
Original Release Date--> Fall '98
New Release Date--> Spring '99

The Game--> Taurus is back after a short retirement to help Groove Champion in this car-shootin' ode to the Reagan years. The game is being done on Activision's proprietary Darkside engine and was coming along nicely until the holidays, when it disappeared and hasn't been heard from since. Our sources say the game will make it out by spring '99, but PCXL is guessing fall is the better bet.

Where are they now?--> To pay the bills, Taurus had been appearing in Magnum Malt Liquor commercials, before being asked to reprise his most famous role. Rumor has it that he and Samuel Jackson have been hanging out quite frequently in Hollywood, comparing sideburns and looking into the long-term effects of gheri curl.

FORCE COMMANDER

Developer→ LucasArts
Publisher→ LucasArts
Original Release Date→ Winter '98
New Release Date→ September '99
The Game→ LucasArts' RTS, based on the *Star Wars* universe, will allow players to choose either the Rebel or Imperial forces. Can we blow up Endor and torch those Ewoks once and for all?
Where are they now?→ After the failure of *Rebellion*, this game is going to get some extra TLC to ensure it doesn't suck Wookie turds. The game is on indefinite hold until the episode 1 (*Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*) games are complete. Our prediction for final release on *Force Commander* is Christmas '99, if at all.

SKIES

Developer→
Paradigm Entertainment
Publisher→ SegaSoft
Original Release Date→
Christmas '98
New Release Date→
Sometime in '99
The Game→ Like a cross between *Messiah* and *Poker Dragoon*, you control a winged creature (they look like fairies) in this game of combat and adventure. The game was originally intended to use the now-defunct Transactor technology, which would allow for online commerce and gaming at one time. *Vigilance* sucked, so *Six* is nowhere to be seen, and the future of *Skies* and SegaSoft is not real bright.
Where are they now?→ Portraying those annoying little pixies in *Zelda 64* who keep shouting "Hey!" at the worst possible time.

The Best Videogame Snack Foods

The only thing more important to a hardcore gamer than a proper hardware setup, is having the right snack foods when they play. The three keys to a good gaming snack food: Taste, ease of eating, and the lack of distraction from the game experience. For instance, twice-baked potatoes are a horrible gaming snack food. They taste awful, are difficult to eat, and that scary stuff inside the potato is bound to end up inside your keyboard, or even more frightening, all over your mouse. The perfect game snack should not interfere, but instead enhance, the gameplay experience.

CHEEZ-ITS

AVERAGE PRICE→ $2.69 per box
UPSIDE→ Can almost pass off as nutritional
DOWNSIDE→ Addictive, and the crumbs can interfere with mouse operation
GAME SNACK POTENTIAL→ High. Easy to eat while playing and a full box will more than satisfy any gamer's craving
PCXL SCORE→ 8 (out of ten)

COOL RANCH DORITOS

AVERAGE PRICE→ $1.99 per bag
UPSIDE→ Cool Ranch flavor takes you to a happy place
DOWNSIDE→ Cool Ranch "stuff" gets on hands and comes off on keyboard
GAME SNACK POTENTIAL→ Low. Taste is great, but the cool ranch residue gets everywhere
PCXL SCORE→ 3

FRIED PORK RINDS

AVERAGE PRICE→ $1.69 per bag
UPSIDE→ It's like eating the parts of a pig not good enough for hot dogs
DOWNSIDE→ Greasy feel on keyboard and mouse, eventual heart stoppage
GAME SNACK POTENTIAL→ Low. After eating a full bag of fried pork rinds, you won't want to do anything, except possibly vomit
PCXL SCORE→ 2

MOON PIE

AVERAGE PRICE→ $.89
UPSIDE→ Goes great with RC cola
DOWNSIDE→ Where on earth can you find RC Cola?
GAME SNACK POTENTIAL→ Medium. Does anyone under the age of 60 eat these anymore? (Fascinating fact: They're known as Wagon Wheels in England)
PCXL SCORE→ 5

ROASTED PEANUTS

AVERAGE PRICE→ $3.29
UPSIDE→ Easy to eat out of a can while focusing on your game
DOWNSIDE→ The occasional peanut down the wrong pipe is scary
GAME SNACK POTENTIAL→ High. They taste great and tossing them into your mouth improves hand-eye coordination
PCXL SCORE→ 5

MICROWAVE POPCORN

AVERAGE PRICE→ $1.59
UPSIDE→ Pop it in the microwave and it's almost like you're cooking
DOWNSIDE→ The nasty burnt popcorn smell when you screw it up
GAME SNACK POTENTIAL→ Low. It's too hard to grab while you're not looking, and the butter grease gets everywhere
PCXL SCORE→ 4

BEEF JERKY

AVERAGE PRICE→ $5.99
UPSIDE→ Protein gives strength for long sessions
DOWNSIDE→ Looks and smells a little too much like roadkill
GAME SNACK POTENTIAL→ Medium. Getting a good bite while focusing only on the game can be a little difficult
PCXL SCORE→ 6

RICE CRISPY TREATS

AVERAGE PRICE→ $.69 (apiece) $3.89 for a bunch
UPSIDE→ Stay together during unfocused eating
DOWNSIDE→ Marshmallow goo is difficult to get out of mouse wheel
GAME SNACK POTENTIAL→ Medium. But the rating changes depending upon the marshmallowyness of the treats
PCXL SCORE→ 7

SOFT GRANOLA BARS

AVERAGE PRICE→ $.89
UPSIDE→ For some reason considered wholesome
DOWNSIDE→ You look like a wuss if anyone catches you eating them
GAME SNACK POTENTIAL→ High. And, you actually don't feel bad eating them, even though they're loaded with the same bad stuff found in candy bars
PCXL SCORE→ 8

BUBBLE YUM

AVERAGE PRICE→ $.45
UPSIDE→ No mess and you can blow bubbles without fear of stickage
DOWNSIDE→ No actual nutritional value (you will eventually have to eat)
GAME SNACK POTENTIAL→ Medium. You'll be hungry afterwards, and your jaw will hurt like a mother
PCXL SCORE→ 6

SEE'S CANDY

AVERAGE PRICE→ $12.99 per box
UPSIDE→ High quality chocolates
DOWNSIDE→ You never know when you will get the nasty crème-filled ones
GAME SNACK POTENTIAL→ Low. Gourmet anything just doesn't belong on a hardcore gamer's desktop
PCXL SCORE→ 1

SNICKERS

AVERAGE PRICE→ $.59
UPSIDE→ Nuts and nougat give extra energy when needed
DOWNSIDE→ No one is really clear on what exactly nougat is
GAME SNACK POTENTIAL→ High. Despite crumbs and the occasional melted chocolate hands, this is a prime snack food for gamers
PCXL SCORE→ 8

WHEN IS LATE TOO LATE?

Much is made of *Daikatana* and other games being late. Here we take a probing look at er, other things which are sometimes late and what kind of effect they might have. As you'll see, delays in games and other artistic endeavors often result in a better product.

HALF-LIFE
HOW LATE--> One year
VERDICT--> Best game ever made

GIRLFRIEND'S MONTHLY VISITOR
HOW LATE--> Three weeks
VERDICT--> "Oh shit!"

THE CABLE GUY
HOW LATE--> At least four hours
VERDICT--> Monopolies can do whatever the hell they want

THE TRAIN
HOW LATE--> An hour
VERDICT--> Built-in excuse for being really late to work

STARCRAFT
HOW LATE--> At least 6 months
VERDICT--> 1.5 million people don't seem to mind so much

SISTINE CHAPEL
HOW LATE--> Originally scheduled for B.C.
VERDICT--> Decent job, but you can tell it was rushed

WATERWORLD
HOW LATE--> Enough to be hundreds of millions over budget
VERDICT--> Anyone seen a Kevin Costner film lately?

TRESPASSER
HOW LATE--> 6 months
VERDICT--> Should have had ten more years to allow a machine capable of running it smoothly to be invented

Tresspasser: the game of the year... if the year is 2015.

StarCraft is one of the few good late things, but your girlfriend's monthly visitor is easily the worst of the bad.

ED LEE
HOW LATE--> At least three hours
VERDICT--> We don't want to see Ed in the morning, it scares us

TITANIC
HOW LATE--> 6 months
VERDICT--> It did okay for a chick flick

NINTENDO 64
HOW LATE--> 1 year
VERDICT--> It still sucked

THE "ELLEN"
COMING OUT EPISODE
HOW LATE--> We all knew anyway
VERDICT--> Apparently millions of middle-class simpletons had never seen a real-live lesbian before

A BALANCED BUDGET
HOW LATE--> A century
VERDICT--> Like its citizens, the U.S. prefers to shop with credit

CLINTON'S ADMISSION OF GUILT
HOW LATE--> From what we've heard, decades at the very least
VERDICT--> Republicans: Guilty
Democrats: Innocent
American justice system: Failed

THE NBA SEASON
HOW LATE--> 3 months
VERDICT--> No Jordan = no one cares?

THIS EDITION OF X-TRA
HOW LATE--> About two weeks
VERDICT--> You make the call! Send comments to worthewait?@pcxl.com.

We've also taken a look at upcoming projects which have suffered similar delays and given our prediction on the outcome.

DAIKATANA
HOW LATE--> At least a year
VERDICT--> It better damn well be worth it

ALIEN VERSUS PREDATOR
HOW LATE--> A year
VERDICT--> From what we've seen, it looks worth the wait (see feature page 58)

SOCCER BECOMES
POPULAR IN AMERICA
HOW LATE--> Decades
VERDICT--> It ain't gonna happen, period

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER
HOW LATE--> Not technically late since they never given release dates
VERDICT--> It will be the shit, and PCXL will tell you about it first

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER
COVER STORY IN PCXL
HOW LATE--> Was supposed to be in first issue (7 months and counting)
VERDICT--> "When it's done" you'll love it, you may be old, but you'll love it

http://www.pcxl.com

PC ACCELERATOR March 1999

We hope you enjoyed your visit to the X-tra section. Please exit to the right and have a nice day

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letters@pcxl.com

FEEDBACK

—> Inane dribblings or fascinating insights in to the psyche of American culture? It's a tough call but **PCXL**'s Letters Page seems to bridge that philosophical chasm with remarkable aplomb. *[Psyche? Aplomb? Philo-sophical chosm? Rob wrote this bit, didn't he? – Ed]*

EXPLAINING "LEAD TIMES"

Why is there no mention of *Bol-dur's Gate* anywhere in your Jan. or Feb. issues? As one of the top one or two gaming mags on the market today, I am surprised this one got by you. I know some hard-core gamers who are play-ing it and loving it. I have read some online reviews about it and so far everyone sings its praises.
— Vic Riggs

If you look at the issue in your hands right now, you will see the review for *Baldur's Gate*. Because some titles ship to reviewers only days before hitting stores, you will see them in all print magazines a couple of weeks later. As for online reviews that go up the day a game ships, ask yourself how much you can trust a review from someone who's only played the game for a day.

I've read your mag from the very first issue, cover to cover, and I love it. I was wondering if you could run some benchmarks com-paring the new Rage 128 card that is in the new G3 Macintoshes with the Voodoo 2 cards out on the market for PCs.
— Jon Brant

We would cover more Macintosh news, but we try to focus on PC information because of the whole PC theme running through our title. When the magazine first started, we voted on whether or not to cover Mac news, and decided that most female Mac users had far too hairy legs and smell vaguely of cheese, so there was no real advantage for us to write a magazine for those kinds of people.

I just bought my first issue of your magazine and I would like to say that considering that in our

society there is so much candy coated crap, it is refreshing to see people give their honest no-bull-shit opinions. Your articles are both entertaining and informa-tive, however I would like to sug-gest that you use some Canadian beer for your next drunk gaming experience instead of the Ameri-can piss water you call beer.
— Bradley Kravitz
Quebec, Canada

You may make fun of our looks, our manhood, even our mothers, but when you attack our beer, it's a whole different story. Canada, this means war. From now on, the Canadian edition of our magazine will be entirely Denise Richards-free. If you insult our beer again, it will get worse. So in your own language: Back off hosers.

AH, THE READERS SPEAK

I get so sick of women bitching about men demeaning women. Well shut the hell up! Who do you think poses for all these photos? Women! So if you have a problem with this kind of "Advertisement," go to the source and bitch to the models and actresses themselves!
— Tim Adkins

Uh, Tim? It's been a long time between dates, hasn't it?

I only have 6 words for you: YOUR MAG KICKS SOME MAJOR ASS! My parents saw it and almost took it away thinking it was porn. My God! I never knew PC magazines could have any-thing fun in them. Just one ques-tion about the Real Doll in your Dec. 1998 issue. Do any of you guys own one? They need to make one of them look like Lara.
— Jeremy Radford

Even longer for you, Jeremy.

[... yoddo, yoddo, yoddo ...] Next time, don't call someone a moron just because you can't under-stand where they're coming from, 'cause you may end up pissing off a potential subscriber.
— Chris "NAILS" Cooper

Thanks a lot Chris. We understand where you are coming from, we feel your pain, and we'll try harder in the future ... moron.

After carefully thinking it over, I have decided to subscribe to your mag. I was unsure until I noticed your insulting jokes. I love them. They're funny, yet not so insult-ing as to hurt the person's feel-ings. Numerous times I found myself burst out laughing after reading one of your jokes. Please, please keep up the insulting jokes. I hope to get my next issue jam packed with funny insults and sexy pictures.
— James Reynolds

Okay, here's a sexy picture of a woman insulting you. We thought you might enjoy it.

It appears you forgot the best Tking excuse in your last issue: "I was trying to respawn and it wasn't going so I kept hitting fire!"
— Fallourdog@aol.com

We tried your excuse and it worked. Two editors were fired for leaving it out.

BABES, YES? BABES, NO?

It just occurred to me, why shouldn't the consumers review the mags? For years I have been reading mags, so I am only reviewing the following ones because of having spent months and years with them. The only mag new to me is PCXL, of which I have only read 3 issues. The rat-ing is out of 10. Here goes:

[Other mags deleted due to lack of interesting information].

PC Accelerator - 7/10 A nice mag but their biggest problem is that they have jokes on every page, which can get irritating. And girls, girls, girls, I get it. They don't have girl-friends. Sad.
— Dr Afzal

Okay, next issue we'll put out a dry, boring magazine without a single picture of a half-naked actress, a stitch of imagina-tion or a page of interesting text. Or we'll just photo-copy our competi-tion. Either way it's the same thing.

PLEASE! Don't take away the babes in your mag!
— Sephiroth
@worldnet.att.no

Consider it done!

"James Reynolds, you're so ugly, that if ugly were bricks you'd have your own pro-jects. Tee, hee."

Gaming 411

Follow these three easy steps to get all the product information you desire!

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2. Select the product category from a complete list. Search by name, or select the vendor's number from the list below for up-to-date info on your favorite games.
3. Follow the format to receive all the info you desire. You will also be able to access the vendor's websites from Gaming 411.

These sponsors make it possible for PC ACCELERATOR to exist. If they make bad games, we'll slam them. If they make good games, then we'll praise them. Whether they advertise or not has absolutely no influence on our content — this we promise.

ADVERTISER INDEX

Daikatana is Gonna Rule!

I t's so easy to nay-say, mock, and taunt in this industry. Just like any industry with high-profile figures, there are people just waiting for them to trip up. Never has that situation been so brazenly illustrated as in the Ion Storm fiasco. It all began with the controversial "John Romero's Gonna Make You His Bitch" ad campaign for *Daikatana* (created by GOD's Mike Wilson before he left the company). Since then, everyone's been waiting to bash the high-fliers, holed up in their stupidly-expensive offices in beautiful downtown Dallas.

Good or bad, *Daikatana* is going to be watched very closely.

Laugh? The industry split their collective sides when nine Ion-ites ditched the company, claiming that the atmosphere was, "not conducive to making games."

Don't get me wrong, I think that *Daikatana*'s constant slipping (initially planned for release in 1997) is an appalling example of the games industry's worst trend. But, and, I'm going out on a limb here, I predict that *Daikatana* is going to be a fantastic game. Why? Because it has to be. And, because whatever you say about them, Ion Storm employs a lot of people who really understand what it's going to take to make a good game. John Romero is certainly guilty of shooting his mouth off too readily – but what father isn't, especially when bragging about their young charge? The hype he created with the exhaustive list of weapons, varied characters, and interactive, immersive environments meant that the work needed to manage these feats was far greater than anticipated.

I love the rumor that an Ion-ite was talking on the phone to a Valve employee after the release of *Half-Life: Day One*, and could supposedly hear someone yelling, "Shit! Shit! Shit!" The alleged source of these rantings? John Romero playing *Half-Life*, and realizing that it would ship sooner than his creation, incorporating many features that he believed would be considered revolutionary in his game.

But that's exactly why *Daikatana* is now the game I'm most looking forward to in 1999. Sure, I wish it had come out in 1998 (I never thought it would hit 1997), but Romero's reputation can last only so long on *Doom*. He needs a success, his company desperately needs the victory, and they have the commitment and talent to make it happen. Game of the Year 1999? My money's on *Daikatana*.

— ROB "ON CRACK" SMITH

Why the hell did the Wonder Twins always form as a bucket of water— not very scary   PC ACCELERATOR   March 1999   http://pcxl.com

SECOND PERSON

Well, like you say, it's pretty easy to take the low road on *Daikatana*, and cynically assume it's gonna be crap, even without seeing the game. But, let me cynically assume it's gonna be crap. It's not like I *want* it to be crap. When it comes down to it, gamers (even the species known as games journalists) want to see good games. And somewhere in the jumbled mess of ideas and concepts that is *Daikatana*, there is the potential for a great game. But I just don't think it's gonna happen, if for no other reason than the subject matter.

Half-Life is guilty of ruining the single-player aspects of many recent FPS titles for me, including *Shogo, Sin, Unreal*, etc. *Sin* in particular seemed like a lame cartoon in comparison. The game with the 11 rating (*Half-Life*, duh) just has a credibility and polish that no one has pulled off before, and its subject matter was something that didn't involve action one-liners and comic-book exaggeration. Let's see, on one hand we've got tense missions and carefully-crafted real world environments. On the other, we've got a sword that travels through time and a sidekick named "Superfly." Um ... nah.

Basically, if *Daikatana* had shipped when it was supposed to, it would have been the shit. In 1999's more sophisticated FPS battlefield, however, it's too little too late.
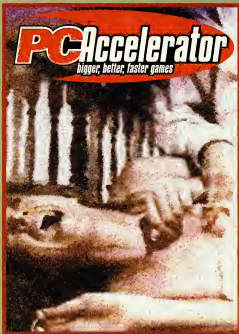
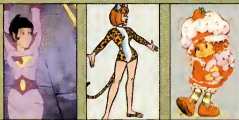Oh I almost forgot. Rob, you're an ignorant slut.

— ED LEE

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